

Russia says it knew UNSCOM spy role for U.S.

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), in a rare foray into the public domain, said on Tuesday it had always known that U.N. weapons inspectors in Iraq were working for U.S. espionage interests. "We have known that American special services cooperate with the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM)," broadly speaking, since the time it was created," SVR spokeswoman Tatyana Samoilis told state-owned Russian Television. "We knew that with the arrival of Butler this cooperation became the main sphere of activity for a small circle of senior officials at the Special Commission, although it remained secret," she said, referring to UNSCOM chief Richard Butler, whose sacking Moscow has demanded. "It began to crowd out its proper U.N. mission, the peaceful disarmament of Iraq."

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية. الراي.

'Eid holiday starts Sunday

AMMAN (Petra) — Ministries, government departments and public institutions will observe a four-day holiday beginning Sunday in observance of 'Eid Al Fitr, according to a communiqué issued by Prime Minister Faysal Tarawneh. The communiqué said civil servants will go back to work on Thursday, Jan. 21 after the holiday. In a related development, the Cabinet Tuesday decided to pay civil servants their salaries for January on Saturday, Jan. 16, one day before the 'Eid holiday starts.

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KLA to free captured Serbs

PRISTINA (AP) — Ethnic Albanian rebels have agreed to release all eight Yugoslav soldiers they have been holding captive for four days, an international official said Tuesday. The head of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Knut Vollebæk, said negotiations for the freeing of the hostages ended successfully. "We have had positive results," he said at a news conference. "We have reached an agreement with the KLA on an early release of the detainees."

Israeli army uproots orchard

ABUD (AFP) — Israeli troops uprooted a Palestinian orchard near a West Bank settlement on Tuesday, the owner of the trees said. Hanna Saba said a bulldozer guarded by Israeli soldiers and police tore up 90 olive, almond and fig trees he had been cultivating for several years near the village of Abud. "By the time I arrived the trees had already been uprooted and when I asked an officer why, he just said I couldn't plant there, without giving any reason," Saba told AFP. The orchard lay across a road from the Jewish settlement of Beit Artye about five kilometers from the Israeli border in the central West Bank.

Lebanon ends restrictions on Palestinian travel

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon said on Tuesday it would end four years of tight restrictions and travel documents it gives to Palestinians in the same way as passports. "The general director of the General Security decided to consider Lebanese travel documents to be given to Palestinians who live in Lebanon as passports and will deal with carriers exactly the same as Lebanese passports," the General Security said in a statement. In 1995, Beirut ordered Palestinians previously resident in Lebanon to obtain visas in order to return to the country. Some Palestinians from Lebanon had been refused visas.

China explosions kill 22

BEIJING (AP) — Explosions at fireworks factories and a market in China killed at least 22 people, 11 of them children, and severely injured 10 others, news agencies reported Tuesday. An unregistered, family-run fireworks factory in Zhencheng city in eastern China's Anhui province exploded Saturday, causing the two-story, eight-room building to collapse and killing 14 people, the official Xinhua News Agency said. Three people were seriously injured. Eleven of the dead were the children of relatives and neighbors who were doing odd jobs in the factory, the report said.

Egypt buries eight victims of soccer stampede

ALEXANDRIA (R) — Eight Egyptians crushed to death in a soccer stadium stampede were buried in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria on Tuesday, officials said. At least 14 people were seriously injured as thousands of football fans rushed into Alexandria stadium to catch the start of a national league pre-qualifier on Monday evening. Security sources said a preliminary police investigation had shown that organizers had opened the stadium gates only a few minutes before kick-off time, prompting spectators to rush down a two-meter wide corridor to reach their seats.

U.S. plane hits Iraq radar site; Gulf tensions rise

WASHINGTON (R) — A U.S. warplane fired a missile at a radar site in a Western-imposed no-fly zone in northern Iraq on Tuesday, the second such incident in two days, as tensions rose in the Gulf area.

The attack took place as Iraq stepped up a verbal blitz against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, accusing them of conspiring with the United States and Britain against Iraq.

A U.S. National Security Council spokesman said the U.S. F-16 jet that attacked the missile site returned safely to its base at Incirlik in southern Turkey.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen said the United States would not give ground in enforcing no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq, imposed after Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the campaign to drive it out the following year.

He said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was becoming more "frantic and agitated." White House spokesman Joe Lockhart added later: "It's been our experience that in times when he is isolated and frustrated, he tries to lash out, and we think now he is in a position where he has never been so isolated and never been so frustrated."

U.S. President Bill Clinton's national security adviser, Sandy Berger, said at an arms non-proliferation conference in Washington that the United States would use all its means, including if necessary more force, to persuade Iraq to comply with U.N. resolutions. Fears of a fresh Gulf crisis rose as Arab media maintained attacks on Iraq ahead of an Arab foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo on January 24.

Commentators in some Gulf Arab newspapers said Baghdad's recent verbal assaults on



An Iraqi woman Tuesday sells a man a can of powdered milk at Shorja market in Baghdad. Some of the women gathered in the market were selling milk they received as rations from the government or from humanitarian aid in the north of Iraq, to buy other goods (Reuters photo)

its neighbours were similar to those on the eve of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

The Iraqi News Agency (INA) quoted a parliamentary spokesman as saying that Iraq's National Assembly condemned Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, accusing them of collaborating in last month's U.S. and British military strikes against Iraq.

Kuwait said it had mobilised part of its military after renewed Iraqi threats and had granted eight U.S. F-16 warplanes permission to deploy there to help defend the tiny oil country against its former occupier.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has announced visits to two key allies — Saudi Arabia and Egypt — to discuss Iraq later this month.

The latest crisis erupted last year when Baghdad refused further cooperation with U.N. arms monitors charged with dismantling its weapons of mass destruction. Iraq has demanded an end to sweeping U.N. sanctions imposed when it invaded Kuwait.

The United States and Britain launched a four-day bombing and missile campaign against Iraq in December as a result.

The head of the U.N. arms inspection team, Australian Richard Butler, has suspended flights of U.S. U-2 spy planes over Iraq while the U.N. Security Council debates the future of the operation to control Baghdad's armaments.

In Ankara, Turkey's new prime minister, Bulent Ecevit, on Tuesday criticised the United States for having no clear

policy aims in its confrontation with Iraq. "I don't understand what the United States wants to achieve."

They have tactics, but no policy or strategy," he said on the NTV television channel. But he fore-saw no change in the status of the joint U.S.-Turkish air base at Incirlik.

In London, British officials dismissed French proposals on how to end the crisis over Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction, underlining the deep split among the major powers on what to do.

"The French want a monitoring mission in Iraq but without a disarmament role. This is absolutely not acceptable to Britain because it rewards Iraq for not cooperating with UNSCOM. It doesn't make sense," a senior official told reporters.

Jewish serial stabber suspected in latest Jerusalem attack on Arab

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — An Arab man was stabbed and seriously wounded in Jerusalem on Tuesday in an attack that appeared to be the work of a suspected Jewish serial killer, Israeli authorities said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said police were actively pursuing the assailant who might be responsible for eight previous stabbings.

"It looks like the same serial murderer that we're looking for. I still can't say this definitively but that's the way it appears," Netanyahu told reporters.

Jerusalem police commander Yair Yitzhaki said there were similarities between Tuesday's attack and previous stabbings in Jerusalem in the past year, mostly in the ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighbourhood of Mea Shearim.

The 57-year-old Arab Jerusalem resident was stabbed near Mea Shearim at around 5:30 a.m. (0330 GMT) as he made his way to work. Nine Arabs have been stabbed in the past year in Jerusalem, two fatally.

Yitzhaki cited the neighbourhood, the time of the attack and the single knife wound as elements that likened Tuesday's attack to previous ones. The knifings began in late 1997.

Last month a Palestinian was stabbed to death in Jerusalem.

Israel Radio said at the time markings on the knife led police to suspect a Jewish assailant carried out the attack.

Police have said previously they suspect the alleged serial stabber is out to avenge the killings of Jews by Palestinians in Jerusalem. A court has banned publication of some details of the stabbings.

King receives British Foreign Secretary Cook

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday received at his residence British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, who delivered a letter from Queen Elizabeth expressing her good wishes for his recovery, as well as conveying the good wishes of the British government, the Jordan Information Bureau in London said in a press release.

During their meeting, Cook expressed the British government's appreciation of the valuable role the King has played in helping overcome

the obstacles that the Middle East peace process has been facing.

The foreign secretary also spoke of the high regard in which the King is held by all the parties involved in the peace process, and of the British government's recognition of the vital role his contribution has made, and continues to make, to peace in the Middle East.

Cook also exchanged views with the King on a number of regional and bilateral issues. The King and Cook agreed that Iraq should uphold U.N.

Security Council resolutions, a Foreign Office spokesman said.

During their half-hour meeting, the two men concurred on the "need for Iraq to adhere to U.N. Security Council resolutions, particularly on weapons of mass destruction," the spokesman said.

He added they also shared concerns about "improving the humanitarian situation of the Iraqi people." King Hussein is expected to meet with Prime Minister Tony Blair on Thursday.

Ross holds separate talks with Arafat, Netanyahu

Sharon refuses concessions to please U.S.

Agencies

U.S. MIDDLE East envoy Dennis Ross shuttled between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Tuesday in a bid to advance stalled Middle East peace talks.

Neither Ross nor Netanyahu addressed reporters after they held 90 minutes of closed-door talks in Jerusalem. Ross also held separate talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, an Israeli source said.

The U.S. envoy then travelled to Palestinian-ruled Ramallah in the West Bank to meet Arafat. Earlier, Ross said the United States, which brokered the last two interim peace agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, will play a much less active role in talks on a permanent accord.

A final peace agreement would draw the final border between Israel and the Palestinian entity and determine the status of Jerusalem. Jewish settlements and Palestinian refugees.

"Permanent status is not something that should be mediated," said Ross, who has spent hundreds of hours shuttling between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in attempts to get interim peace agreements implemented.

In final status talks, "the two sides are dealing with existential questions that must be negotiated by them," Ross said in a roundtable discussion organised by the Peres Centre for Peace.

"They must learn to live together. The only way to learn to live together is to learn to hammer out difficulties," Ross said. Meanwhile, Sharon brushed aside U.S. displeasure with Israel's refusal to carry out West Bank withdrawals promised under a U.S.-brokered peace accord.

He specifically accused the PNA of failing to round up illegal weapons in areas under its control, including heavy weaponry like anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles allegedly in the hands of Palestinian security forces.

The United States, which was tasked with monitoring implementation of Wye River, has disagreed and called on Israel to carry out its obligations under the deal, but to no avail.

When U.S. President Bill Clinton visited Israel and the Palestinian territories in December in an unsuccessful bid to get the Wye accord back on track, he said Arafat would return to the region within weeks for further peace efforts.

But the State Department announced last week that Arafat would not be coming, given Israel's decision to freeze implementation of the accord. The secretary of state will instead be visiting Saudi Arabia and Egypt later this month.

Interviewed on Israel radio, Sharon rejected criticism from Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, who blamed Israel for stopping the peace process in remarks Monday in Tel Aviv. Egypt is one of only two Arab states at peace with Israel.

Sharon said that instead of joining anti-Israel attacks, Musa should agree that commitments must be carried out.

The United States raised its profile in the Israel-Palestinian negotiations after Netanyahu, a one-time opponent of the peace agreements, came to power in May 1996.

U.S. donors meet Netanyahu, rival right-wing candidates

TEL AVIV (AFP) — U.S. millionaire Irving Moskowitz, a major financier of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Arab east Jerusalem, met Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Tuesday to discuss how to help the Israeli right-wing national elections in May.

"We need to help the right-wing political parties remain in government and prevent the disaster which would result if the left-wing wins the elections," Moskowitz said before meeting with Netanyahu.

Moskowitz arrived in Israel Monday with 14 other influential Jewish American donors to discuss the upcoming elections.

His coalition collapsed last month due to a right-wing revolt over the Wye agreement, but Netanyahu later suspended the promised West

Bank pullbacks, citing what he said were Palestinian violations of the accord.

Three hawks from Netanyahu's Likud party have already announced that they will challenge him for the prime minister's post. Benny Begin, Uzi Landau and Moshe Arens, a former defense minister and one-time mentor of the current premier.

A member of the Moskowitz team, New York City councilor Dov Rikind, said the group would try to convince these rivals not to splinter the right in the elections.

"We need to join in one force against the left," he told AFP.

Moskowitz is a key backer of the radical Jewish group Ateret Cohanim, which spearheads efforts to settle Jews in Palestinian parts of annexed east Jerusalem.

France presenting Iraq proposals to 'big five'

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — France was to present to the other four U.N. Security Council permanent members on Tuesday the "general outline" of its proposals for a new arms monitoring system in Iraq, Western diplomats said.

A Western diplomat told AFP that French Ambassador Alain Dejammet would explain the ideas for the first time to U.N. envoys of Britain, China, Russia and the United States at a closed-door meeting later in the day.

Dejammet met with U.N. chief Kofi Annan on Tuesday, and was believed to have given details of the French initiative to the secretary general at that private meeting.

"The ideas will be presented in a very general way" to the other permanent members, at the meeting of the five permanent council members called at France's request, the diplomat said.

The French proposals notably call for the lifting of the U.N. oil embargo, which is linked to Iraqi disarmament, and for a new monitoring system to be put in place to ensure that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein does not rebuild his weapons of mass destruction arsenal.

The proposals have been discussed informally in capitals in the wake of the December U.S. and British air strikes on Iraq, but have so far failed to win U.S. and British approval on the issue of

lifting the eight-year-old embargo, diplomats say.

French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine said after talks in Moscow on Tuesday with his Russian counterpart Igor Ivanov that France would submit to the U.N. Security Council its ideas "to resolve the current situation and redirect the U.N. vigilance methods."

"An effective system to control Iraqi weapons must be created, and at the same time we must help relieve the Iraqi people, who have lived under very difficult conditions for seven years now," he said.

Vedrine added: "There are Russian ideas, there are French ideas, they are close and complementary, but there is not a single procedure."

The French proposals come as the 15-member Security Council is about to resume discussions attempting to rebuild Iraq policy in the aftermath of the air strikes, after which Iraq vowed that the U.N. weapons inspectors with the U.N. Special Commission would never be allowed to return.

However an Iraqi diplomat on Tuesday expressed scepticism about the French proposals, seen as maintaining a military embargo on Iraq.

"Iraq would support ideas that lift the sanctions, and take into account the legitimate demands of Iraq," the diplomat said.

"But Iraq will not support ideas which impose new measures."

Turkish Premier Ecevit pledges secularist path

ANKARA (R) — New Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit on Tuesday outlined his staunchly secularist programme in a speech to parliament by vowing to follow the principles of Ankara's secularist founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

"To all the problems we may face, we shall seek solutions in the enlightened path of timeless leader Ataturk," said Ecevit, whose new minority government will lead the country to polls in April.

Ataturk forged overwhelmingly Muslim Turkey as a secular country in 1923 and has remained a dominant political figure.

Veteran Ecevit became premier on Monday at the head of a minority government after six weeks of political crisis. Tension between the secularist army and main opposition Islamists has risen in recent days.

The leftist leader managed to garner outside support from two

rival conservative parties. The powerful military has called several times in the last 10 days for an end to political instability.

Ecevit, three times prime minister in the 1970s, acknowledged that the new administration does not have enough time to make a mark because of elections set for April 18.

However, economic woes at home and differences with NATO ally Italy over the fate of a Kurdish leader in Rome are concerns he has to deal with. Ecevit repeated previous promises to pass urgently a 1999 budget and banking bill, reform the costly social security system and grant union rights to public sector employees.

He also pledged to keep up the fight against inflation.

Annual wholesale price inflation dived to 54 per cent in December from 91 per cent a year earlier.

Istanbul shares ended 0.10 per cent lower as Ecevit made the speech, designed to reinforce

parliamentary support ahead of a confidence vote scheduled for Sunday. Ecevit is likely to win the vote.

The main opposition Islamist Virtue Party and secularist parties are expected to compete fiercely in the upcoming polls.

Virtue, the biggest grouping in the parliament, is tipped to do well at the polls despite suffering from a two-year legal onslaught inspired by the army. It has already launched an election campaign.

Friction between the Islamists and the military, which staged three coups since 1960s, increased at the weekend when the military said that Virtue could be outlawed for allegedly threatening democracy and Turkey's secular constitution. Ecevit said his administration would push ahead with the implementation of an eight-year compulsory education system, aimed at cutting grassroot support for Islamists.



Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit (left) is applauded after presenting his new cabinet and programme at the Turkish parliament in Ankara, on Tuesday (Reuters photo)

'Turkey's policy on Cyprus will not change'

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit said Tuesday that his new government would not waver in its support the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is recognised only by Ankara.

"The fact that the Greek-Cypriot government had to go back on deploying Russian missiles on the south of the island was a result of the process of strengthening relations between Turkey and the TRNC. That

process will continue under our government," Ecevit told the Turkish parliament.

Ecevit — who as prime minister in 1974 ordered the Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus which divided the island — said that a confederation of the two sides was the only realistic political solution.

"The existence of two states in Cyprus is an undeniable reality... our government supports the proposal by TRNC President Rauf Denktaş for the creation of

a confederation on the island to solve the Cyprus problem," he said.

Denktash has repeatedly called for a confederation on the island based on international recognition of the TRNC. Both Athens and Nicosia are opposed to the plan. The Greek-Cypriot government in Nicosia last month opted not to take delivery of Russian-made anti-aircraft missiles after Ankara's threats to destroy them if they were deployed on the island.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sudanese militias clash in Juba

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan has ordered all pro-government armed factions to leave the southern town of Juba after six militiamen were killed and several were wounded in a weekend grenade attack, an official said on Tuesday. Bahr Al Jebel Governor Henry Jada said that a shootout on Monday between two rival factions also contributed to the government's decision. "The decision is now being implemented and some of the groups have been sent to the eastern and western banks of the river Nile," Jada told Reuters by telephone from Juba.

Yemen expels 700 Africans

SANAA (AFP) — Yemen expelled more than 700 Africans at the end of last year, mostly from Somalia and Ethiopia across the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea, police announced on Tuesday. General Sharaf Al Mushiki, police chief in the port city of Hodeida, said a total of 740 refugees from the Horn of Africa were expelled in the last weeks of 1998. They were part of a group of almost 1,000 Africans who were detained for illegal entry, said Mushiki, quoted in the weekly Al Mithaq. The rest were to be expelled "in the coming days."

Five Arab ministers to discuss Iraq

CAIRO (R) — Foreign ministers from five Arab countries will hold talks in Egypt in the next few days to prepare for this month's Arab League ministerial meeting on Iraq, Egypt's Foreign Minister Amr Musa said on Tuesday. Last month's U.S.-led air strikes on Iraq exposed sharp differences among Arab states with some condemning the raids and others blaming Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. "In the next few days there will be a consultative meeting of foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, Oman and Egypt," he told reporters.

PNA recovers over 40 stolen cars

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Palestinian police are due to hand over more than 40 stolen Israeli cars recovered in raids in the north of the West Bank, a police official said Tuesday. The head of Palestinian police liaison in the West Bank, Aouni Al Samari, told AFP that 41 stolen vehicles along with a variety of spare parts had been found in raids carried out by Palestinian police in the Jenin area. Nearby, Israeli police and troops had sealed off the Palestinian village of Shweiki in the Tulkarem region in an effort to find stolen cars, Palestinian security sources said.

Egyptian killed in building collapse

CAIRO (AFP) — A man was killed and his wife and son were injured when the roof collapsed on their building in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, the government newspaper Al Akhbar reported Tuesday. Monday's accident followed the collapse of a building in Cairo over the weekend in which six people were killed. In the Alexandria incident,

Khatami to visit Saudi Arabia

RIYADH (AP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami will visit Saudi Arabia in March, the daily Al Riyadh reported Tuesday. Khatami's visit is at the invitation of Crown Prince Abdullah, and the two officials will discuss developments in the Gulf, the Middle East peace process and the slump in global oil prices, the Arabic-language paper said.

Iranian drug traffickers arrested

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwaiti police have arrested three Iranian drug traffickers and seized some two kilos of opium, the interior ministry said Tuesday. The opium was hidden inside wooden picture frames, said a statement from the ministry, quoted by the official KUNA news agency.

U.N.'s Cyprus representative to meet

NICOSIA (AFP) — U.N. permanent representative to Cyprus Ann Hercus will travel to London Wednesday for talks with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and then meet U.N. chief Kofi Annan in New York, the United Nations said Tuesday. "Both meetings will focus on the U.N.'s 1999 agenda of efforts to resolve the Cyprus problem," the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) said in a statement. Hercus met Monday with Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides for the first time since Cyprus decided against the deployment of controversial Russian-made missiles in the south of this eastern Mediterranean island.

Baghdad wants better relations with Tehran

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan told a senior Iranian official that Baghdad wanted to improve its ties with Iran, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported on Tuesday.

During a meeting with the visiting undersecretary of Iran's Foreign Ministry, Mohammad Reza Sadr, INA said Ramadan invited Iranian Vice President Hassan Habibi to visit Iraq to further improve relations.

"Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Habibi is invited to visit Iraq to bring viewpoints

closer between the two Muslim countries," INA quoted Ramadan as saying.

The government newspaper Al Junthouriya said Sadr was sent by Iranian leader Mohammad Khatami to President Saddam Hussein.

Ramadan also praised Iran's stand during last month's U.S. and British air strikes against Iraq, which Tehran opposed.

He said committees from both countries were holding meetings to solve all pending issues between Baghdad and Tehran.

Iraq and Iran, which

fought an eight-year war in the 1980s, have held a series of talks to tackle thorny issues including the release of remaining prisoners.

Iraq opened its border with Iran in 1997 and last year commissioned a checkpoint complex near the Iraqi border town of Mundhiriya. Since then, several thousand Iranian pilgrims have crossed the border to visit Shi'ite Muslim shrines in Iraq for the first time in 17 years.

Iraqi Kurd group calls for expanded no-fly zone

ANKARA (R) — An Iraqi Kurdish faction has called for the Western-imposed no-fly zone in the north of Iraq to be expanded to cover all of a Kurdish-held enclave that challenges President Saddam Hussein's authority.

Baghdad has refused to recognise the legitimacy of the air exclusion zones in northern and southern Iraq. U.S. warplanes patrolling the north attacked Iraqi air defence installations in the area on Monday and Tuesday.

U.S. and British planes,

based in Turkey, monitor airspace north of the 36th Parallel, covering government-controlled territory as well as a large swathe of the Kurdish enclave that split from Baghdad after the 1991 Gulf War.

"The international community should enhance Iraqi Kurdistan's security by extending the no-fly zone to cover the 40 per cent of Iraqi Kurdish territory not presently patrolled," the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) said in a statement faxed to Reuters on Tuesday.

The PUK is based in the town of Sulaymaniyah, south of the 36th Parallel and outside the cover of the patrols. Iraqi opposition to the no-fly zones, set up to protect Kurds in the north and Shiite Muslims in the south, has alarmed the two rival factions that run the Kurdish-held enclave.

In a meeting between the leaders of the two groups at the weekend, Massoud Barzani and the PUK's Jalal Talabani agreed to put aside their differences in view of the tense situation.

Israel OK for regular flights to Gaza

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel gave formal authorisation Tuesday for Egyptian and Jordanian airlines to make regular flights to the new Palestinian airport in the Gaza Strip, the foreign ministry said.

Under the decision, Royal Jordanian and EgyptAir will be able to schedule two weekly flights into the airport, located at the southern tip of the Gaza Strip.

"The Palestinian National Authority also plans to develop air links with Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Cyprus."

Since the opening of the airport in November under the terms of the U.S.-brokered Wye River peace agreement, Israel had given permission for flights in and out of Gaza on a case-by-case basis.

The foreign ministry said the decision to authorize regular flights followed unspecified "modifications" by the Palestinian Authority concerning the functioning of the airport, where security is under joint Israeli-Palestinian control.

Algerian MPs approve Hamdani's programme

ALGIERS (R) — Algeria's parliament approved the government programme of newly appointed Prime Minister Ismail Hamdani after a three-day debate on Tuesday, officials said.

"There was no vote-counting as the majority approved the programme," a senior official told Reuters.

"As expected, those who voted against were the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) party and the Workers' party. But they are too small to make a difference," he added.

Deputies from the RCD, which has 19 seats in the 380-member parliament have blasted Hamdani's plan as a copy of the programme of his predecessor Ahmad Ouyahia who resigned last month.

Officials said that many deputies from the Nahda party which controls 34 seats abstained in the voting.

Nahda is seriously split after its leader Abdullah Jaballah joined leaders from four other parties in efforts to forge a common stance to confront what they see as an attempt by the army to impose Algeria's next president in a poll due in April.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Cartoon — "The Adventures of Teddy Ruxpin"
15:30 Children's Programme — Halfway to Cross the Galaxy and Turn Left
16:00 French Documentary
16:30 (Ch. 2 links with Ch. 1)
17:00 French programme
18:15 Omar Ben Abdul Aziz
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Words of Wisdom
19:30 News headlines
19:35 Comedy — 2 Point 4 Children
20:00 Islam in a Changing World
20:30 Drama — NYPD Blue
21:15 The Great Moments of Science and Technology
21:30 Faces and Places
22:00 News in English
22:30 Cover Story
23:10 The Album Show
23:59 End of T.N.

PRAYER TIMES

04:56 Fajr
05:11 Sunrise/Duha
11:44 Dhuhur
14:33 Asr
16:56 Maghreb
18:18 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366

Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751

Armenian International Church Tel. 5865897

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138

Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 5920146

The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757

The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679

The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052

The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331

The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Dr. Khalil Al Tushiq 4757253

Dr. Bahjat Bader 5332642

Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 5350432

Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi 4893542

Moderate weather conditions

will prevail during the day becoming cool at night.

Clouds will appear at different altitudes and winds southeasterly moderate.

In Aqaba, it will be warm to moderate, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 03/17

Aqaba 08/22

Deserts 02/18

Jordan Valley 09/23

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 17, Aqaba 22 Humidity readings: Amman 25 per cent, Aqaba 24 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 04/11

Jerash 07/19

Um Qays 04/17

Madaba 05/17

Petra 05/18

Dead Sea 12/24

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Firas Pharmacy 5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636750

Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004

Rukn Al Dava Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'ammeh (02)250080

Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

ZARQA:

Dr. Walid Nabhan (09)3851743

Palestine Pharmacy (09)883562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111

Civil Defence Department 5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

AMMAN:

Electric Power Co. 4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199

The Islamic, Abdi 5666131/7

Husseini Medical Centre 5856836

Luzmila 4630195

Khalidi Maternity 4642816

Akileh Maternity 4642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362

Malhas, J. Amman 4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071

Shmeisani Hospital 5607431

Jordan Hospital 5607550

University Hospital 5353444

Al-Musaher Hospital 5667279

Al-Ahli, Abdi 5664164/6

Italian, Al-Mutajreen 4771101/3

Al-Bashir 4775111/26

Army, Marka 4891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 5157100

Amal Hospital 5607155

Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:

Govt. Hospital 09/883323

Zarqa National Hospital 09/900560

Ibn Sina Hospital 09/986731

Al Hilma Modern Hospital 09/990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital

J. Electricity Authority 5815615

Electric Power Co. 4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199

The Islamic, Abdi 5666131/7

Husseini Medical Centre 5856836

Luzmila 4630195

Khalidi Maternity 4642816

Akileh Maternity 4642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362

Malhas, J. Amman 4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071

Shmeisani Hospital 5607431

Jordan Hospital 5607550

University Hospital 5353444

Al-Musaher Hospital 5667279

Al-Ahli, Abdi 5664164/6

Italian, Al-Mutajreen 4771101/3

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Princess Basma Hospital

American Muslims call for support from the region

HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Tuesday meets with Abdul Rahman Alamoudi, founder of the American Islamic Council, and Sharifah Al Khatib, founder of the Council of Muslim Women in North America. The Regent underlined the importance of positive interaction between Muslims and other world cultures, commenting that quiet and constructive dialogues can highlight the common cultural denominators while respecting different views. (Petra photo)



By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — Islamic regimes have too often turned a deaf ear to the needs of American Muslim organisations which have been working hard for the past decade to combat discrimination and Islamophobia and help Muslims find their rightful place in American society, activists complain.

While Arab and Muslim writers and politicians busy themselves dwelling on the influence of the powerful American Jewish lobby in shaping the foreign policy of the world's only superpower, their oil-rich governments have put little, if any, effort in trying to empower American Muslims.

"I wish Saudi Arabia or Dubai would give us the equivalent of the price of just one of their jets," said Abdulrahman Alamoudi, founder and president of the Washington-based American Muslim Foundation.

He was speaking Tuesday at a roundtable organised by the USAID at the American Embassy.

In less than one decade, the AMF, together with the American Muslim Council, and another 10 American Muslim organisations at the national level along with some 400 local groups, have made great accomplishments.

Alamoudi proudly noted that the third annual 'Eid Al Fitr banquet will be hosted at the White House, for the first time, on Jan. 20, while four Muslim

chaplains have recently been appointed in the military, two Muslim women are currently working in U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton's office, and Arabic is now the second language in three public schools in Washington alone.

But all this and more has been accomplished without help from any Islamic country; the AMC's pronouncement that it will never lobby for any Arab government probably has something to do with it.

"We have asked for financial help for two teachers and Arabic school texts to put together a curriculum, but no government gave a penny," said Sharifa Khatib, founder and vice-president of the North American Council for Muslim Women, established in 1992 by 150 multi-ethnic women as an independent, continent-wide organisation.

During her 30-year work in the echelons of numerous Muslim organisations in the U.S., Khatib, a second-generation American, has not allowed discrimination to embitter her.

"Once, at a traffic lights, another driver pulled down the window and spat at me, shouting, 'Go home,' I answered, 'I am home!'"

To stop discrimination against Muslims, and educate them to be an effective political force in America, the AMF and AMC have used a "pro-active and positive approach."

In the case of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim propaganda often reflected in Hollywood movies, for example, Muslim

American groups have successfully stepped up public awareness campaigns, by engaging the media and distributing leaflets to the public.

"The release of the movie 'The Siege' was accompanied by open-house in the mosques, and the result was that the producers complained that our campaign killed the movie," Alamoudi said.

Khatib and Alamoudi told yesterday's roundtable participants that resorting to the media to advance the cause of around 10 million American Muslims has been fruitful.

"Media are not all bad. Cable News Network ran a fabulous series on Haj last year, and the Holy Month of Ramadan is usually reported on very well," Alamoudi said.

"We are trying not to concentrate totally on national media, because 60 per cent of Americans take their information from the local media," Khatib added.

Muslim American organisations have worked towards turning crises around to their benefit. "One of the consequences of the Rushdie affair was that the sale of the Holy Koran went up, and a lot of people were talking about Islam," Alamoudi said.

"The Muslim community has been slandered, but that has also happened in part because we have isolated ourselves rather than make contacts with local and national authorities, or engaging with the media," Alamoudi said.

Among the greatest chal-

lenges ahead for Muslim Americans is gaining representation in Congress, since all Arab Americans currently sitting at Capitol Hill are Christians, the two speakers said.

But this could end soon, as Khatib says she is seriously considering running for the Senate next year.

Her long experience as an inter-cultural trainer of teachers and multicultural specialist has taught her that "American Muslim youth, from elementary school up to college age, consider themselves part and parcel of America, and they are not likely to resort to violence."

In order to rectify misconceptions and stereotypes of Islam and Muslims in the West, moderate Muslims need to gain exposure.

And in this process, Khatib said, Muslim women can play a crucial role. "The more people look ahead, the more they buy in the idea of modernisation, and women in particular tend to look at least 20 years ahead, to the future of their children, and their children's children."

"We teach women how to talk, starting from their husbands at home, and then how to get involved in a larger society."

"We are trying to learn what our rights are, and when discrimination happens, we are telling people to turn around and see what they can do legally to redress [the wrong they suffered]!"

Alamoudi said.

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Customs Department halts tax exemption on new taxis

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Taxi and service owners have complained that the Customs Department has stopped granting customs exemptions to them after they have surrendered their older vehicles to the government for free in exchange for the ability to purchase new vehicles duty free, an official from the Drivers Union said Tuesday.

However, officials from the Jordan Customs Department said the department had to delay granting new exemptions because the department is preparing to issue a new customs law.

According to the official, who requested anonymity, the law will be enacted this month with approval of the Council of Ministers.

The official declined to give further details on the new law

or on the amendments expected to be made to the older one.

Under existing arrangements, owners of taxis and service cars may turn in their old vehicles to the Customs Department to qualify for exemption from customs duties on replacement vehicles.

Owners complain that the sudden halt in granting the exemption has dealt them a substantial financial setback, since they turned in their old cars to the government for free instead of selling them as used vehicles, denying them the profit needed to replace their old vehicles and cover the cost of customs on cars and repay bank loans withdrawn to purchase new vehicles.

"I am not working any more. I gave my car away to the government in order to improve my living conditions, but the sudden decision has brought me a financial disaster, and I

barley, can make my ends meet," said Mohammad Ali, a taxi owner waiting for the government to issue him the exemption.

Another driver complained that he prepared all the necessary documents and took a loan from the bank to buy with it the new car. He and others have to wait until "the government changes its mind."

"I have already bought a new car, and while it is collecting dust in the Zarga Duty Free Zone I am lost because I am indebted to the bank with JD7,000," complained another.

"I have to pay JD250 a month to the bank, while I cannot feed my children."

He said he has not worked for two months, and instead is waiting, like the rest of his colleagues, for the next decision to be taken.

"They should have warned us about this measure earlier in

order that we would not involve ourselves in financial commitments we cannot honour," he added.

The government's three-year old measure was a dramatic boost to the transport sector, particularly in improving the quality of the taxis and service taxis on Jordan's roads and in replacing the Kingdom ageing fleet of trucks.

The measure was the latest in a programme implemented by the Ministry of Transport to improve the transport sector to accommodate an increase in foreign visitors after signing the 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

Several thousand taxis were replaced after the government offered customs exemption for new vehicles if the old ones were surrendered to the Customs Department. The department in turn, is selling them off, mostly as scrap.

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Writer apologises to Swiss ambassador

AMMAN (I.T.) — A leading newspaper columnist yesterday offered a written apology for comments published earlier stating that Switzerland's newly-elected president further consolidates Zionist aspirations of world domination.

Raja Al Issa, an Al Ra'i columnist and a founding father of Jordan's press corps, wrote yesterday that he intended no offence to Switzerland in his article.

"I would like to express my respect and admiration for the Swiss democracy and rule, unique in the world, and to clarify that I did not intend any humiliation," wrote Issa.

Issa wrote on Sunday that the election of Ruth Dreifuss, the first woman and a Jew to

be elected to the seat of Switzerland's presidency, constituted a blow by world Zionism against the Swiss Confederation. He further wrote that world Zionism "came full circle" with her election which coincided with an initiative by international Jewry, particularly in the United States, to pressure Switzerland to reach an agreement with Swiss Banks to collect nearly \$1.5 billion on behalf of Jews of German descent.

"I hope that the ambassador did not misunderstand me when I said the election of the new president coincided with the Swiss-international Zionism agreement," Issa wrote in his apology. "[The agreement] forced [Swiss] banks to

pay \$1.5 billion in to the German Jews. The election also coincided with Israel's presentation of medals of appreciation to Americans who supported the agreement and pressed the banks. [Dreifuss' election] also coincided with the repeated cancellation or delay of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Switzerland." Switzerland's Ambassador to Jordan Gian Federico Pedotti wrote a scathing reply in Al Ra'i the next day, saying that Dreifuss had been democratically elected by the Swiss Parliament in accordance with 150-year old regulations.

The envoy said religious affiliation has no weight in the election process, and each of the seven Swiss cabinet mem-

bers is elected by rotation for the post of president for a 12-month period.

"Issa's statement(s) are false, and so insulting, to the extent that I find myself in a position to reject it and condemn it in part and in parcel," Pedotti wrote.

"The seat of presidency is part of the country," Issa concluded. "Perhaps what I want to say is that, after all that has happened between international Judaism and the Swiss interests, the election of Ruth Dreifuss is an example of Switzerland's sophisticated democracy, which upholds the wisdom of Christ's saying that 'to the person who struck you on the right cheek, give to him your left'."

AMMAN — Over 1,000 Shiites residing in Jordan have celebrated the anniversary of the death of Imam Ali, considered the Imam of the Shiite branch of Islam.

Officials said the crowd of men, women and children celebrated the occasion, one of Shiites' holiest events, at the holy Moslem shrine of Ja'afar Ben Abi Taleh, Imam Ali's brother, in Mazar Janoubi, near the ancient southern city of Karak, late on Friday.

"They broke their Ramadan fast on Iraqi dates and other Iraqi food and prayed into the night," said a young man who attended the ceremony.

"They also reviewed the life and actions of Imam Ali and recited verses of traditional elegiac poetry showing their love to the Imam."

Most of the Kingdom's 4.2 million population are Sunni Muslims. And, unlike neighbouring Iraq and Syria, there are no Jordanian Shiites.

"Jordanian authorities supplied them with necessary services such as water, electricity and security to enable them to perform their religious rituals," said Ali Khawaldeh, Mazar Janoubi district officer.

They began their seven-hour-long celebration by visiting Imam Ja'afar's tomb where Shiite cleric Ali Baghdadhi delivered a sermon on the life of the Imam and his efforts to spread the message of Islam.

Most of the Shiite Iraqis in Jordan arrived in the Kingdom after the Gulf crisis, seeking political and economic refuge from the upheaval caused by Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Most of them are working here, eking out a precarious existence to support families back home on meagre wages they earn, or are waiting for visas to immigrate to the West.

The Shiites are the only important surviving sect in Islam and owe their origin to the hostility between Imam Ali Ben Abi Taleh (the fourth Caliph and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammad) and Mo'awiah Bin Abi Sufian, the first Caliph of the Umayyad dynasty (661-750).

After Imam Ali's death, the Shiites demanded the restoration of Muslim rule to Imam Ali's family, and from that demand, developed the Shiite legitimism — the divine right of the holy family to rule.

Shiites are spread in Iran (Shiism has been the religion on the state of Iran since the 16th century), Iraq and North Africa.

Although Shiites number only about 40 million, Shiism has exerted a great influence on Sunni Islam in several ways.

The veneration in which all Muslims hold Imam Ali and his family and the respect shown to his descendants, who are called sayyids in East Africa and sharif in North Africa, are obvious evidence of his influence.

Plans are currently under way to have other partners from outside the ministry in this respect," Masri told the Jordan Times.

Masri, now heading the Human Resource Development Team, said the educational reform plan emphasises the development of the national examination based on ability and knowledge instead of rote learning.

"The aim is of producing quality education which does not determine a student's success based on quantitative or numerical achievements," he said.

"Freeing up" the basic education curriculum would mean eliminating the literary and scientific streams in the 11th and 12th grades, Gharaibeh said.

Most students, it seems, welcome the impending changes. Hanadi Elias, a senior student preparing to sit for the tawjihi this spring, said, "This examination is a disaster".

She told the Jordan Times that she must score a 95 per cent average before being admitted to the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Jordan.

"It's ridiculous," she said. "I know what my abilities are as a science student. Maybe I can achieve a 90 per cent average, but 95 per cent? Why don't they just ask students to get a 100 per cent average?"

The minister said another plan under consideration is changing

what's going on

Special religious services
Special Christian and Muslim religious services will be conducted at different houses of worship to give thanks for His Majesty King Hussein's recovery and imminent return to Jordan. On Thursday, Dec. 14, Jordanian Muslim women will hold special afternoon prayers at the various mosques in the Kingdom. On Saturday, Dec. 16, the Roman Catholic Bishop Salim Al Sayegh will lead prayers at St. John de La Salle Church, Sharifa Zeln Bin Nasser requested that prayers be organised through the Women's Affairs Department at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

Film
"Conspiracy Theory" at Books@Café, Jabal Amman, on Thursday Jan. 14 at 10:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457).

Play
"Al Bab Al 'Ali" by Al-Dhiffah Group — Beit Al Karmeh (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday Jan. 14 at 7:30 p.m.

Exhibitions
Exhibition of ceramics, sculpture, and abstract (plastic) art by Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Sudanese artists at Hammourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Surret (Tel. 5536098), until Jan. 25.

Exhibition of Nabataean silver jewellery at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Saqra Street, until Jan. 15 (Tel. 5699141/2).

The Warm Winter — works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1

Days of Tawjihi numbered

Educators and students say the gruelling exam no longer accurately assess scholastic aptitude

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — The days of the gruelling, one-chance-only tawjihi (high school general certificate exam) may be numbered senior officials and educational experts said Monday.

Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh said the government is studying means of redeveloping the structure and content of the tawjihi.

"This will be a two phase process," Tarawneh said. "A one-year transitional period will begin this year where students can sit the exam during two separate semesters." "The final phase, which will start next year, will allow students to take the exam over a two-year period that includes three academic semesters."

The tawjihi is the final exam for senior students and is the primary determinant for their entire academic future. The exam is administered in nine disciplines in two streams: academic and vocational.

More and more often, both students and educators complain that the tawjihi does not measure the real scholastic ability of the student and creates unwarranted stress for students. Not only does the education become more focused on grades than on learning, the tawjihi also generates enormous pressure from society and families to the extent that guidance counsellors last spring said that most students appearing in their offices reported stress caused by tawjihi.

Tamara Nuqul, who will sit the exam this spring described tawjihi tension as "unbearable."

"The examination is a matter of life or death," she said. "Everything depends on this moment. They tell us if you work hard for tawjihi then you can rest for the rest of your life. tawjihi, then, is your life."

"I always think that if I fail I will lose everything," she said. "What will people think? What will my family do?"

In an earlier interview with the Jordan Times, Minister of Education Fawzi Gharaibeh said the exaggerated fear of the tawjihi, created by society and some higher education institutes has to be eliminated.

Placing less value on tawjihi scores would help remove the "tawjihi complex," Gharaibeh said.

He projected that universities will soon have to develop new standards to evaluate and accept students into universities.

According to Gharaibeh, the ministry "plans to assign a national examination centre the responsibility of preparing school tests and university entrance exams."

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Mohammad Kaddah, director of the General Examination Directorate at the Ministry of Education, explained that the national centre would replace the ministry's General Examination Directorate.

During a lecture at the Royal War College Monday, the education minister said the national centre would be technically, administratively and financially independent.

Gharaibeh stressed that the entire plan is still in its conceptual phase and still requires funding and qualified expertise.

Director of the National Centre for Human Resources Development (NCHRD) Munther Masri echoed these sentiments but cautioned that as of yet, Jordan does not have the necessary expertise to undertake such a massive revision of the existing tawjihi system.

"Jordan was cooperating with British experts in the field," he said.

Masri, a former education minister, said, "The Ministry of Education should also be a partner in this process, but it should not be the executive body."



Senior students sit for the 1998 Tawjihi exam (file photo)

"The aim is of producing quality education which does not determine a student's success based on quantitative or numerical achievements," he said.

"Freeing up" the basic education curriculum would mean eliminating the literary and scientific streams in the 11th and 12th grades, Gharaibeh said.

Most students, it seems, welcome the impending changes. Hanadi Elias, a senior student preparing to sit for the tawjihi this spring, said, "This examination is a disaster".

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Delors says European Commission fraud row vastly overblown

PARIS (AFP) — France's former European Commission President Jacques Delors Tuesday described allegations of fraud and nepotism by the Commission as a "dangerously overblown" affair.

The European Parliament is to hold a censure vote Thursday on the issue that, if adopted, would force all 20 members of the commission to resign.

Delors said on Europe 1 radio however that "this affair seems to me to be dangerously overblown and worsened by the settling of accounts either in certain countries or in the European Parliament."

The former 1985-1995 European Commission called for a settlement between the parliament and the commission in order to avoid resignations and scandal at a time when the European Union faces important business.

"It seems to me that in the interests of the European

cause, and to satisfy demands for transparency and democracy, the European Parliament and the Commission must come to an agreement that would improve management on the one hand, and checks on the other."

"With European elections only a few months away and important deadlines for Europe looming, there is nothing to be gained from a dispute that must be sized back to its right scale."

Delors said there had been claims of irregularities during his time as commission president but that they were on a minor scale.

"In our time there were allusions to possible fraud in certain countries regarding the common agricultural policy and structural policy (regional handouts)," he said. "But they would only have represented the tiniest part of the community budget."

"What public or private institution can claim over a

10- or 20-year period that it has made zero mistakes and committed zero fraud?"

European Commission President Jacques Santer, seeking to stave off censure, Monday outlined proposals for a shake-up of the EU executive's internal organisation.

Addressing the parliament in Strasbourg, Santer unveiled plans for three new codes of conduct governing the work of the 20 commissioners, staff who work in their private offices and officials in the commission's various directorates.

Together the codes would constitute "the foundation of a real European administrative culture," Santer said.

Santer promised to support an increase in the parliament's powers to scrutinise spending programmes and called for talks between the two institutions on the remit of a new anti-fraud office he has proposed following a flurry of scandals.

Britain to crack down on persistent burglars

LONDON (AFP) — Persistent burglars will face an automatic minimum of three years in prison in a crackdown on crime unveiled Tuesday by British Home Secretary Jack Straw.

The minimum sentence, a new element to a £250-million (\$417.5 million, 357 million euros) package of crime reduction measures announced in summer, will be imposed on people convicted of burglary for the third time.

But Straw's announcement drew criticism from the opposition, who said it was pointless imposing harsher punishment if there were not enough police on the streets to catch criminals.

As well as tougher sentences, the measures include more money to be spent on problems such as domestic violence and on

tackling burglary in 500 of the worst-hit neighbourhoods.

Straw said the scheme should not be confused with California-style "three strikes and you're out" legislation.

"This is not the equivalent of what goes on in California, where if you commit three felonies you go to prison for life. It is nothing like that at all," he said.

"Domestic burglary is a very serious offence. It is a violation of privacy and can be extremely traumatic."

The minimum three-year sentence would be imposed for three separate sets of burglary convictions, which in practice could involve dozens or even hundreds of burglaries.

The National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders

hailed the crime prevention measures as "imaginative" and "positive."

But director of policy Paul Cavadino criticised the minimum sentence plan as putting punishment over prevention.

Straw's opposition Conservative counterpart Norman Fowler welcomed harsher sentences, but said they were pointless if burglars were not caught.

Liberal Democrat home affairs spokesman Richard Allan also warned of lack of police numbers.

Latest Home Office figures show there are 781 fewer police in England and Wales than when the Labour government came to power in May 1997, with some 25 out of 43 police forces experiencing a drop in numbers.



Singer Will Smith poses with his two American Music Award he won as Favourite Male Artist Soul/R&B and Favourite Album-Pop or Rock n' Roll for 'Big Willie Style' during the 26th annual American Music Awards, Jan. 11, in Los Angeles (Reuters photo)

Court postpones ruling on extradition of American fugitive

BORDEAUX, France (AP) — A French court postponed Tuesday the final ruling on a U.S. request for the extradition of an American fugitive to stand trial for the 1977 murder of his girlfriend.

Ira Einhorn, 57, has been sentenced in absentia to life in prison by a Pennsylvania court for the murder of Helen "Holly" Maddux — a crime he denies, even though police found her corpse stuffed in a trunk in his closet.

A prominent anti-war campaigner and New Age activist in the 1960s, Einhorn fled the United States shortly before his trial.

After 16 years on the run, he was tracked down and arrested at his French home in June 1997.

Einhorn has been fighting

U.S. efforts to extradite him ever since.

Judge Claude Arrighy Tuesday gave no reason for the postponement and said a new hearing would be held Feb. 18.

Einhorn appeared in court for the hearing, wearing blue jeans and a green shirt that he didn't tuck in. He was accompanied by his longtime Swedish companion, Anika Flodkin.

Einhorn was laughing loudly when he entered the court, apparently having shared a joke with Flodkin. When the judge read the decision, Einhorn bowed and said "Merci, merci."

His defence lawyers have argued that if extradited, Einhorn could face the death penalty, which is banned under French law.

They also claimed

withdraw the pledge of a retrial.

A French court had refused to extradite Einhorn in December 1997, citing a law that would require a retrial if he were extradited. Pennsylvania then passed a law promising Einhorn a retrial. He was rearrested in September 1998 but at a subsequent court hearing he was ordered released.

When Maddux, a former cheerleader from Tyler, Texas, vanished, Einhorn said she had gone out shopping and had never come back.

However, 18 months later, neighbours reported a stench coming from Einhorn's apartment, and Maddux's battered remains were found. Forensic experts said her skull had been smashed six times.

NEWS IN BRIEF

EU envoys expected back in Belarus

MINSK (R) — Ambassadors from the European Union who angrily left Belarus last year in a row over housing will return to Minsk Sunday, a German embassy spokesman said Tuesday. "According to an agreed decision, the ambassadors will return together at the same time on Jan. 17," he told Reuters. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko had said earlier he was expecting the EU envoys to return by January 14. Ambassadors from several EU states, as well as the envoys of the United States and Japan, left Belarus last June after local authorities abruptly denied access to their residences in the Drozdy complex near Minsk and offered them a new location. The dispute marred the image of Belarus — a former Soviet republic sandwiched between Russia and Poland — in the eyes of the West. Lukashenko, who lives in Drozdy, has been criticised in the West for treatment of opposition groups in Belarus and for refusal to adopt market reforms. After lengthy negotiations, Belarus and the EU agreed last month that diplomats would return but must leave Drozdy within a month. Belarus has promised to pay for relocation and other inconveniences. The United States is not a party to the compromise deal.

Taiwan scraps obsolete media control law

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Legislators Tuesday threw out an obsolete publications law, a remnant of Taiwan's martial law era, which had been used to tightly control the news media. Lawmakers also ordered the Government Information Office, charged with regulating the media, to delegate some oversight responsibilities to other bodies. The 70-year-old law had been an instrument of state control over the media, especially during the 1949-1987 period of martial law when the Nationalist Party imprisoned writers and closed publications that criticised the government. Following Taiwan's subsequent shift to democracy, its media has become one of the liveliest and freest in Asia. Newspapers compete vigorously for readers, and though the Nationalists still retain considerable influence over network television, editorial controls have been lifted in the face of competition from cable TV. The publications law had remained on the books, even though many of its articles stirred controversies over censorship. Government spokesman Chen Chien-Jen welcomed the abolishment of the law as a "necessary policy of a mature democracy." Other laws still on the books can regulate libel, sexual content and registration of publications, Chen said.

EU envoy says Kosovo killing was professional job

VIENNA (AFP) — The assassination of a leading ethnic Albanian activist in Kosovo appeared to be the work of professional killers, according to the EU special envoy to the troubled Serbian province Wolfgang Petritsch. "There are many possibilities for who carried out this murder," he told Austrian television referring to the killing Monday of Enver Maloku, head of the Kosovo Albanian Information Centre (KIC) in Pristina. He said the assassination "was apparently politically motivated" and "the work of professional killers." Maloku was shot dead Monday by three assailants in front of his house in the Kosovo capital.

Air attack on Kisangani killed about 10, say rebels

KIGALI (AFP) — Around 10 people, all civilians, were killed Sunday when an Antonov plane dropped three bombs on the northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) city of Kisangani, rebels said Tuesday. In Rome, the missionary news agency Misna reported Monday that around 50 people had died in the attack on Kisangani, the DRC's third city and the rebels' military headquarters. A spokesman for rebel commander Jean-Pierre Ondekana told AFP by satellite telephone from Goma, the rebels' political headquarters in the east, that many people were wounded in the attack and in hospital, with a number of them likely to die of their wounds. Local people put the death toll at between seven and 16, he said. The spokesman said the Antonov targeted a residential area of Kisangani in the 9:00 p.m. (2000 GMT) attack. He described the bombs as hand-made. Rebels said bombs dropped last year from an Antonov on the southeastern town of Kalemi, which they said caused the death of about 25 civilians were also hand-made.

Wife and son of former Afghan commander shot and killed

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — The wife and son of a major figure in Afghanistan's Islamic uprising against invading Soviet soldiers were shot and killed in this border town at the foot of the famed Khyber Pass, officials said Tuesday. Abdul Haq, widely respected for his covert attacks on invading Soviet soldiers during the 1980s, was in the United Arab Emirates at the time of the attack. A bodyguard also was killed, police said. No one has taken responsibility for the shooting that occurred late on Monday in the Hyatabad suburb of Peshawar, barely 50 kilometres from the Afghan border. Haq has been a strong critic of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban army and his brother Haji Qadir, a former governor of eastern Nangarhar province, is a member of the anti-Taliban alliance. Haq also has been a strong proponent of an alternative government in Afghanistan, which would include representatives of scholars, religious leaders and expatriate Afghans. The Taliban army rules roughly 90 per cent of Afghanistan and has imposed a harsh brand of Islamic law that calls for public executions, beatings and amputations. It also forbids women from working, girls from attending school and insists that men wear beards and pray in the mosque. The Taliban are fighting opposition forces on several fronts, all of them in northern Afghanistan.

Bomb hoaxter tried to stop love leaving on a jet plane for France

NOUMEA (AFP) — Police said Tuesday they had arrested a man who tried to stop his sweetheart and son leaving the Pacific island of New Caledonia by claiming to have planted a bomb on an Air France flight. The Boeing 747 flight from the French Pacific territory to France was delayed by two hours as police searched the plane and luggage. The man in his 30s was released after questioning and is due to appear in court. He faces a heavy fine and a prison sentence.

Greenpeace hopes for China action on toxic waste

SINGAPORE (R) — Environmental group Greenpeace said Tuesday it was confident China would prevent contaminated ships from being sent to Asian scrapyards.

The comment was made as Anglo-Dutch ship "Encounter Bay" departed Singapore apparently en route to a scrapyard in China.

Greenpeace claims the ship is contaminated by toxic materials.

"China has (something of) a leading role in the international community in terms of stopping foreign waste from coming into the country," Clement Lam of Greenpeace China told reporters.

Monday, Greenpeace activists hung a giant banner reading "P&O Nedlloyd Stop Toxic Trade" on the ship, which is owned by Anglo-Dutch firm P&O Nedlloyd.

Singapore's Environment Ministry said in a statement it understood the ship's next port of call was Hong Kong. Greenpeace said the ship had been sold to Chinese shipbreakers and expect it to ultimately end up in a scrapyard in China.

They said their expectations that China would not allow ships from entering Asian scrapyards without being decontaminated first were based on China's past strong position on prohibiting imports of waste materials in other forms.

But Greenpeace had not yet discussed the issue with Chinese authorities,

although a meeting with the Chinese ambassador in Singapore was scheduled for later Tuesday, Lam said.

Greenpeace officials are protesting what they say is the limited care with which shipowners dispose of vessels in Asia.

Ships sent to shipbreakers in India, China, Bangladesh and Pakistan often contain hazardous materials such as lead and asbestos.

but very little protection is provided for the environment or for workers at those scrapyards, Greenpeace said.

The officials said they had written to Singapore authorities asking that "Encounter Bay" be detained under the Basel Convention.

The United Nations' Basel Convention prohibits the export of hazardous waste from the nations of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to non-OECD countries.

But a statement by the Singapore Environment Ministry received by Reuters Tuesday said Singapore did not consider "Encounter Bay" hazardous waste and saw no legal ground to detain the ship or send it

back to the Netherlands.

It said the Basel Convention defined "waste" as substances or objects which are disposed of or intended to be disposed of, but that ships carrying such substances were themselves not defined as wastes.

Letters to governments of ports that "Encounter Bay" had stopped at prior to

Singapore had produced similar responses.

Greenpeace officials said. The ship had stopped at five other ports before Singapore, including in Spain, Australia and New Zealand.

"A transit government is not going to have nearly the same amount of concern as that of a recipient state or of

the export state where there is liability," said Jim Puckett of Basel Action Network, who is working with Greenpeace on the current issue.

"But we're very hopeful that certain governments that have been much stronger on this issue like the EU and China will take some steps," he said.



Two international environmental activists display banners on a boat while staging a water-borne protest in Singapore against "toxic" ship the Encounter Bay (background) owned by Anglo-Dutch shipping giant P and O Nedlloyd which is to be scrapped in China. The ship, which was unloading its last container shipment in Singapore before being scrapped in China, contains high levels of toxic and hazardous materials including heavy metals and asbestos (Reuters photo)



Mea Son (right), the widow of late notorious Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot, stands next to an unidentified relative and her daughter (left) as they watch Cambodian refugees leaving Phu Noi refugee camp at the Thai-Cambodian border, 500 km north east of Bangkok. About 400 refugees, the first group of Khmer Rouge dependents, returned to Cambodia after their leaders Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea defected to the Phnom Penh government last month (Reuters photo)

Families of Khmer Rouge head home from Thai camp

THAILAND (R) — Nearly 400 Cambodian refugees, mostly dependants of Khmer Rouge fighters, headed home Tuesday in the first phase of the repatriation of some 35,000 inmates of camps in Thailand.

The refugees, returning with the help of the U.N. refugee agency, said they were happy to be returning to Cambodia now that the war between the government and the Khmer Rouge has ended.

The war is over and our senior leaders, Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea are joining with (Prime Minister) Hun Sen so we can return home," said Pui Lai, 43, a father of six who was among the 395 people put on buses back to Cambodia Tuesday.

Khmer Rouge leaders Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea surrendered to Hun Sen's government late last month.

More than 20,000 people fled to northeastern Thailand

in April last year as Cambodian government forces overran Khmer Rouge headquarters at Anlong Veng near the Thai border after several thousand Khmer Rouge fighters defected to the government.

"I am very happy to go back and return to my family as the war is over," said returning Cambodian Cheun Juang.

Among those who saw off the refugees from the Phu Noi camp was Mea Son, the widow of notorious Khmer Rouge chief Pol Pot who died in a remote rebel zone last April.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is taking the refugees back to Cambodia via the northwestern border town of Poipet rather than straight back across the border to Anlong Veng, even though many of the refugees said they wanted to go back to their old homes at Anlong Veng.

"Actually we wanted to return to Anlong Veng but the UNHCR has no access to that area so I decided to go through Poipet," said Phoung Cheun, 42, heading back to Cambodia with his four children.

Most of the returnees said they were originally from Monduliri province in Cambodia's northeast. Some of them said they had lived in the Anlong Veng area for 20 years.

The Khmer Rouge were responsible for the death of an estimated 1.7 million people during their 1975-79 "killing fields" rule.

The radical leftist group was forced from power by a Vietnamese army of invasion in 1979 and later battled the Phnom Penh government from sanctuaries on the Thai border.

UNHCR figures show some 14,866 refugees remained in the Phu Noi camp but a Thai army officer said he believed the real figure was much lower as many people had already crossed back into Cambodia on their own.

"I think about 10,000 or less are still in the camp because many families have gone back on their own at night," said the Thai officer based in the camp.

A group of former Khmer Rouge guerrillas crossed back into the Anlong Veng area last week to prepare for their families' return, the officer said.

Some 35,000 Cambodians remain in three Thai camps including about 5,000 royalist supporters who crossed into Thailand in 1997 to escape fighting which erupted after then First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh was ousted by Hun Sen, his junior coalition partner at the time.

A second group of 600 refugees is due to go back to Cambodia from Phu Noi camp Friday, UNHCR officials said.

Freetown smoulders after rebel retreat, amid fears of starvation

FREETOWN (AFP) — Much of Freetown lay in ruins Tuesday after retreating rebels murdered civilians, started fires and looted shops, while relief agencies warned that residents faced starvation in the isolated Sierra Leonean capital.

Battles and blazes raged Monday in eastern districts of Freetown, with the military blaming arson attacks on the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group and renegade government troops who had been routed.

Tuesday, foreign ministers Joseph Koffi of Togo and Amara Essy of Cote d'Ivoire were to meet with detained RUF leader Foday Sankoh, who was sentenced to death on treason charges last October.

Diplomats in the Guinean capital Conakry told AFP that Sankoh is being held aboard a Nigerian ship off the coast of Sierra Leone.

ECOMOG commander General Timothy Sheldip Monday said that troops of the Nigerian-led intervention force he leads were pushing the rebels back through eastern parts of the city, where corpses were strewn in the streets and food was running out.

"The rebels burn, pillage and kill as they go through," and use civilians as "human shields," Sheldip said.

An unnamed ECOMOG official warned: "There are still small groups of rebels and isolated gunmen. It will take another few days before the city is safe again."

The meeting between the foreign ministers and Sankoh could take place aboard the vessel or in another location such as in Guinea, which borders Sierra Leone to the north, an AFP correspondent in Conakry said.

The rebels have insisted on the release of Sankoh, and are demanding to meet him on "neutral ground" in order to ensure that their leader is in good physical and mental condition.

The ministers, who held a lengthy meeting with President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah Monday, hoped to convince RUF deputy leader Sam Bockarie that Sankoh was sincere when he reportedly agreed to a ceasefire after meeting the president last Wednesday.

Bockarie, field commander of the rebel forces, rejected the announcement conveyed by Kabbah Thursday, and instead declared a general offensive.

The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) warned that hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped in Freetown could starve if hostilities continued.

All shops and markets have been shut since the rebels' surprise invasion last Wednesday, and the fighting effectively closed off the main highway where food is brought into the capital from the interior.

Residents have remained holed up in their homes with little or no food, and no water, electricity or telephone links.

"We are gravely concerned about the severe hardship imposed on the civilian population," said Paul Ares, west Africa regional manager for WFP.

In Geneva, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also expressed deep concern for residents, calling on the rebels to let it continue its humanitarian operations, which were suspended last Wednesday.

"In some areas of the city, people are finding it difficult to leave their homes in order to gather food, assist the wounded or simply bury the dead," the ICRC said in a statement.

A resident said of Monday's fires: "We've never seen anything like it, even in the worst fighting during 1997 and 1998."

He had lived through a rebel coup and witnessed, nine months later, the takeover of the city by ECOMOG troops. ECOMOG helicopters

and planes Monday flew frequent sorties, ferrying reinforcements and casualties between the Lungi airport, which lies across an estuary from Freetown, and the city itself.

Monday, Kabbah insisted on hosting foreign ministers Koffi and Essy at his residence in Freetown to demonstrate that ECOMOG was in control of most of the capital.

The two ministers, who were accompanied by U.N. special envoy Francis Okello, were shown three soldiers identified as Ugandan mercenaries fighting with the rebels, diplomats said.

The mediators expressed their confidence in Kabbah and insisted on a negotiated solution to the crisis.

The RUF first began an uprising in 1991 and linked up with a junta which in May 1997 toppled Kabbah.

ECOMOG intervention troops ousted the junta from Freetown in February last year. The force was set up in 1990 by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), currently chaired by Togo.

Nigeria Monday hosted talks among ECOWAS member states.

Sunday a reporter was killed by rebel fire, and another was seriously wounded.

Japan parties make progress towards coalition government

TOKYO (R) — Negotiators from Japan's ruling party and opposition Liberal Party made progress Tuesday in sorting out their differences, clearing the way towards the formal announcement of a coalition by the Thursday deadline set by Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi.

With agreement reached late Monday on ending a system where bureaucrats answer questions in parliament on behalf of ministers, the one major hurdle remaining with two days left was a thorny set of security issues.

Chief government spokesman Hiromu Nonaka expressed confidence that the two parties will manage to chip away at their differences and reach an accord, perhaps by late Tuesday.

"I believe the path will open before us if we continue the talks in a serious manner," Nonaka said.

He added that he hoped for an agreement by the end of the day. Japan's public broad-

caster NHK television reported there was a possibility the coalition could go through even if an agreement was not reached on all points of the security issues.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Liberal Party, led by Ichiro Ozawa, have been haggling over differences concerning the role of Japan's Self-Defence Forces (SDF) in U.N.-led missions as well as a package of bills designed to implement updated guidelines for defence cooperation with the United States.

The discussions have occasionally become so acrimonious that raised voices were audible outside the meeting rooms. Last week the two parties reached a broad agreement to lift a ban on the participation of SDF personnel in U.N. peacekeeping forces.

Japan's 1992 U.N. Peacekeeping Co-operation Law prohibits the SDF from participating in U.N. missions except those that involve purely non-combat operations.

The Liberal Party wants to expand the role of the SDF in U.N. missions, but the LDP is reluctant to accept all of its demands out of fear it would lead to changes in Japan's pacifist constitution.

Nonaka touched on this when he said: "Based on the constitution, we must make clear what we can compromise on and what we absolutely cannot compromise on." Although both parties appeared ready to make adjustments in time to stage the cabinet reshuffle, as planned, Thursday, there were a few hints of possible foot-dragging on the part of the Liberal Party.

Ozawa was quoted as telling Tamisuke Watanuki, an LDP lawmaker and close political associate of Prime Minister Obuchi, that while he does not intend to stand in the way of the alliance, he still hoped to keep the emphasis on policies.

"I am not thinking at all of ruining the coalition," Ozawa reportedly told Watanuki at a meeting at Liberal Party headquarters Tuesday, Kyodo news agency said.

But when Watanuki reportedly urged both parties to make efforts towards reaching an agreement, Ozawa replied: "It is important to scrupulously carry out policies. There is no need to rush the coalition."

Obuchi, in Germany on the last leg of a week-long tour of several European countries, said he anticipated being able to reshuffle the cabinet as expected.

"I strongly expect and hope that there will be an agreement by the time I return so that we can form a new coalition government," he told reporters accompanying him Monday.

He added that he had instructed party leaders, including Nonaka and Secretary-General Yoshiro Mori, to do their "utmost" to clinch an agreement with the Liberals.

Cambodian opposition demands answers over Khmer Rouge deal

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodia's opposition Tuesday demanded the government explain why two defuncting Khmer Rouge leaders were not arrested last month, and to disclose details of a de facto amnesty deal.

The self-named party of outspoken dissident Sam Rainsy also demanded the government say why it has yet to answer a single opposition question presented through the National Assembly.

The party wants to know who was behind the failure of the ministry of justice to issue arrest warrants for Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, who defected last month, under the terms of the law outlawing the Khmer Rouge.

A series of questions also demanded that Prime Minister Hun Sen disclose the details of a de facto government amnesty, adding that the government must explain the obstacles to their future arrest.

Since the formation of the Hun Sen-Prince Norodom Ranariddh coalition government, the self-named party of the outspoken dissident has presented questions over illegal logging, amnesties to Khmer Rouge leaders and food shortages.

None have so far been answered, leaving the party to charge the government has failed "to comply with the basic mechanism of accountability."

Sam Rainsy's party holds just 15 out of 122 seats in parliament, and acts as Cambodia's sole opposition party after a post-election alliance with Prince Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC party ended with the Prince joining Hun Sen.

The party demanded an explanation from parliamentary speaker Prince Ranariddh as to why opposition questions remain unanswered — a violation of article 96 of the constitution.

Indonesia 'deeply regrets' Australia's change of stance on Timor

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesia said Tuesday it "deeply regrets" Australia's change of stance on the problem of East Timor, adding that it would have an adverse effect on the search for a lasting solution.

"We are concerned and deeply regret that the Australian government has changed its policy on East Timor," Foreign Minister spokesman Ghaffar Fadhy said in a statement.

Australia, the only western country to recognise Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor following its 1975 invasion, announced Tuesday that it would urge Indonesia to grant the territory self-determination up to and including independence.

The foreign ministry spokesman described the policy shift as substantial. "This decision prejudices the ongoing negotiations between Indonesia and Portugal under the auspices of the United Nations which recently had shown some progress," he said.

"And furthermore it will have an adverse effect on the search for a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the problem."

The government never discussed this. The autonomy we are offering is normal, taking into account the

particularity of East Timor. "As far as I know there is no such thing," he replied when asked if the government had ever considered making autonomy a prelude to eventual independence.

Quizzed on the same subject, Justice Minister Muladi had a softer response. "We haven't gone that far... what we are offering is just plain autonomy," he said.

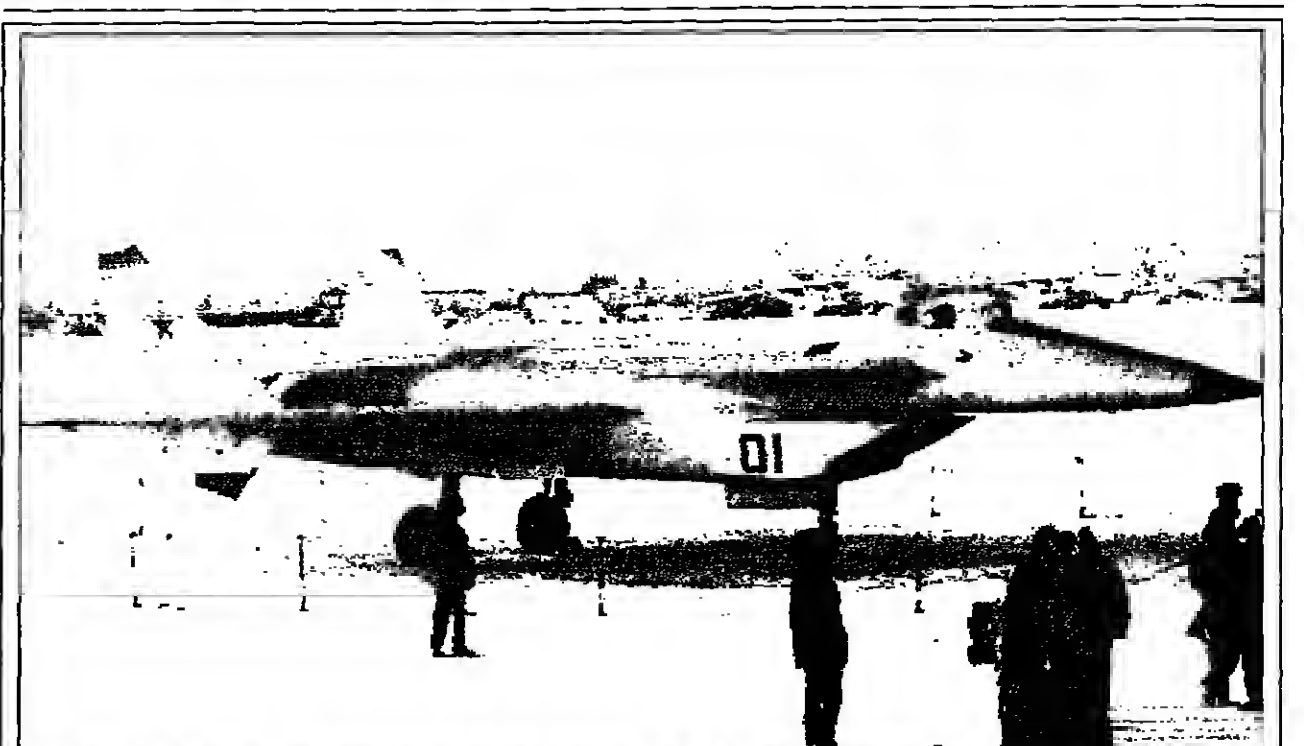
Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said an early move to self-determination would trigger civil war in the troubled province, but Canberra would press Jakarta to allow self-determination following a long period of autonomy.

He told reporters in Adelaide that Australia still

opposed independence for the former Portuguese colony annexed by Indonesia in 1976. But if the East Timorese people wanted independence after a period of autonomy, that had to be supported. "We would see that as a second best outcome but we would obviously have to live with that as the outcome," Downer added.

"When we talk about East Timor being part of Indonesia that is our preference but in the end people in both Indonesia and East Timor itself will determine their own future."

Australia had also urged Indonesia to allow jailed resistance leader Xanana Gusmao to be part of the self-determination process, he said.



STEALTH UNVEILED — Russia unveiled its first stealth fighter jet Tuesday more than 12 years after a blueprint of the radar-eluding plane appeared on a military draught board. The MiG jet, still without a formal name but known here as MF1 and in the West as "project 1.42" according to Russian media reports, was shown off to Defence Minister Igor Sergeev and other top ministers at a suburban Moscow airfield. The fighters, should they ever go into production following a series of test-flights this year, are meant to rival the U.S. F-117 stealth jets that have already proven themselves in the 1991 Gulf war. The sleek fighter, whose image proudly adorned Tuesday's front page of the government-run Rossiyskaya Gazeta, was first envisioned in 1986 in a top-secret Soviet defence laboratory. Only two such jets have been built so far, and the project was nearly scratched in 1995 because of budget constraints. Russian Defence Ministry and MAPO-MiG sources would not reveal Tuesday the project's cost nor an estimated price-tag for each fighter (Reuters photo)

Winston Churchill once said that Americans can be counted on to do the right thing after they have exhausted all the alternatives. Inshallah, but if not it may be they should seek help from the other members of the U.N. Security Council or some of the Arab countries which may still come to the fore with more promising ideas for a solution.

The reverend revolutionaries

They believe in the power of the word. And the word is advertising. Meet the men of cloth who want to convince you that the Son of Man is no "wimp"

By Ann Treneman

IN THE beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. So said John. You know, the apostle who could really write. All of that was a few years ago, and these days he might need to update that sentence. In the beginning was the Brief and the Brief was with God and the Brief was God. It's the kind of thing that might resonate with the Churches Advertising Network, that band of misunderstood Christians who decided a few months ago that the brief for this spring's advertising campaign should be The Real Jesus. You know, the revolutionary who died on the cross. No, not the guy wearing dishevelled hair, who is always surrounded by lambs and children. The guy with the crown of thorns. The guy who, in fact, looks remarkably like Che Guevara. You know, the Argentinian atheist and T-shirt icon.

The advertising campaign showing Jesus looking awfully like Che was launched [in Britain] this week. The red-and-black poster pictures the Son of God looking off into the distance, as revolutionaries in berets often do, with a slogan underneath that says "Meek. Mild. As if. Discover the real Jesus." The traditionalists are appalled. It is blasphemy. Che and Jesus! Really. The Bishop of Wakefield feared the adverts would "trivialise the mystery of the godhead." He added: "I am not sure it is the proper way of presenting the message of love and peace." The Bishop of St. Albans, the Right Rev Christopher Herbert, said that young people might think that "As If" was a pop group. "The image is very Sixties," he said. "I cannot see how it will appeal to younger generations."

I asked a member of the Churches Advertising Network, the Rev Peter Owen-Jones, whether he thinks that young people might think that As If is a pop group, and it is his turn for a little outrage. "That demonstrates the problem rather than solves it. And you can quote me on that." Before he became a vicar in

Haslingfield, Cambridge, three years ago, Rev Owen-Jones was an advertising copywriter, but he didn't anticipate that this campaign would be called blasphemous. He thinks the reality of church life does have a hard edge. It is not all white lambs and blue-eyed children. He says that the problem is that although the churches are part of the Establishment now, their founder simply was not. So there is bound to be tension between the two, even now. "It is uncomfortable for them," he says.

He blames the Victorians. They are the ones who created the sepia portrait we all have of Jesus, happy and smiling in dress and halo. This is Christ, our Saviour of the Comfy Slippers mentality. It is an extremely nice image but also, perhaps, rather ineffectual. And not that far from the way many people perceive the Church itself these days. The reality is far different. "As a vicar you deal with tragedy and the apparent senselessness of it all," says Rev Owen-Jones. "You deal with drug addiction and alcoholism and self-interest in the extreme. You deal with selfishness and greed. These are all things that every vicar would have to comfort and deal with in other people, as well as look at our own personal failings."

Meek and mild. As if, Rev Owen-Jones thinks that hard-edged and gritty is more like it. And revolutionary. "This campaign really is an honest attempt to try to deal with a part of the story which will not be familiar to people who actually read the Bible. Jesus was anti-materialism and anti-greed. This is a revolutionary line, especially in our society today."

Tom Ambrose is a vicar and the director of communications in the Church of England diocese of Ely. He is also a member of the Net-

work. "It's terrible that Christians want the picture of Jesus to be a sort of a wimp," he says. "Jesus created an absolute revolution in the lives of the people who wrote the Gospels."

are Christians (though they belong to different denominations) and they believe in the power of advertising. They are controlled by no one. Every Christmas and Easter they work, with the creative team drawn from Christians in the media, to make a campaign. The members of the Network reject labels such as "modernist" and "radical", but that is what they are. Not particularly because they believe that the real Jesus was a revolutionary, but because they believe in advertising and its power to make people think. "We don't do wallpaper. We do advertising," says Rev Tom Ambrose. "Unless it makes you stop and think twice, then what's it for? Our adverts will be up in the High Street against everyone else's. We want ours to be stronger than that. Maybe we have succeeded."

Robert Ellis, communications director for the Church of England in Lichfield, helped found the network in 1991. I asked who the network serves. "There is a huge debate on that one. We exist to serve the Church, which to a large extent has not got a clue about advertising and marketing and public relations. The gap between the Church and the public is getting larger by the day. This is about closing that gap. It's an uphill struggle." He says that many in the Church do not even know what the scenery is. I don't either, so I ask. He means the scenery for advertising. "For them advertising is a puke-green or fluorescent orange piece of paper written on in felt tip behind a piece of cling film, flapping dejected in the wind." He says that the early Church did have a clue. They had mystery plays and John Wesley and his horse and "dear old St. Paul in his boat."

All of this seems very far away from Che in his beret, however. But everyone — the vicars and the creatives — insists that this should not be taken that way. They have used Che as an icon, an image, an idea. Chas Bayfield is a member of Christians in Media and he is one of the "creatives" behind the campaign. He says that the revolutionary idea came quickly and he, for one, thinks it is perfect. He says that there is an image now of Jesus as "a bit of a poof." This is simply not appropriate. "We felt very strongly that Christ is misrepresented terribly. It's almost insulting. I want to be known as a follower of this amazing revolutionary man, not some effeminate fairy in a white dress. I'm a grown man. I can't believe in fairy tales!"

Nor does he particularly believe in Che Guevara. "I didn't really know much about him. In fact, I didn't even know he was a Communist. But he really is the Trivial Pursuit revolutionary, isn't he? He's the one everyone recognises. I mean, most people couldn't even name too many revolutionaries. If I were to say 'Carlos the Jackal' to you, would you know what he looks like?' I say that, yes, I would. Square face and Michael Caine glasses. I'm not sure about the revolutionary bit, though. Mr. Bayfield sighs. "Well, most wouldn't. My old granny wouldn't. Che really is the token revolutionary."

Somehow I don't think Che would agree. Judy Beishon, of the executive committee of the Socialist Party, says that she thinks the campaign is a bit strange. "It's anything, it is probably a bit unfair to Che Guevara." But say we agree, just for the moment, that Che is just an icon and that Jesus is the real revolutionary. Does it mean anything deeper, really? The Churches Advertising Network would say yes. Rev Peter Owen-Jones believes there is a quiet revolution going on. The Church is changing. It has to change. "It is absolutely right that it is uncomfortable. It provokes change — and that is what Jesus did. Change is never easy. The Church is not comfortable with this image. It is more comfortable with this meek, mild person bumping around taking care of lost cats. But that's not the reality of it at all."

— The Independent



The reverends Ambrose and Owen-Jones: "Jesus was anti-greed: today that's revolutionary"

That's why they wrote about it. You can read the story of feeding the 5,000 and it is about baskets and bread — or you can read it again and it's 5,000 men hiding away in companies of 30 and 100, drawn up like an army. In the end Jesus fled. He didn't want to be that kind of revolutionary. But that's what the people — those men and Herod et al — thought he was. "That's why he was crucified!"

The members of Churches Advertising Network are bound together by two things: They

Virtual Lego set to transform toytown

By Matthew Green
Reuters

HALF A CENTURY after children first played with Lego, the plastic building bricks have been swept off the carpet and onto the computer screen.

The three-dimensional software version of the Danish Lego Group's colourful interlocking blocks is one of a new wave of toys aimed at tempting children with technology and changing the way they play.

"I like it because you can click on things and make them move," said seven-year-old Samuel White, testing an on-screen Lego kit at a toyshop in London.

His five-year-old brother George nodded in silent approval as nearby stacks of the plastic sets stood for the moment forgotten.

Nostalgic adults, who remember the plastic coloured bricks from their own childhood, were sceptical.

"The kids definitely prefer it, but as a member of the older generation I prefer the real thing," said Samuel and George's uncle, Keith Lambert.

To adults like Lambert, the whole point of a toy like Lego is using your hands to build things, not a mouse and a computer screen.

But toy manufacturers have always sought to utilise new technology in their designs, said Gerry Masters, secretary



of the British Association of Toy Retailers.

"Inventors of toys have always had a very sharp eye for the technology market," said Masters. "Electric train sets came out in the 1920s when electricity was still a relative novelty." Early train sets, which were prone to catching fire due to an erratic power supply, seem like medieval relics next to computerised versions of toys.

But Masters said there was room enough in the nursery for both of them.

"I don't see a war between physical toys and computers because both offer a different experience," he said.

"We're still selling loads of Monopoly sets, even though you can get Monopoly on the computer."

When it comes to physical toys, playthings stay the same.

The finger-length clay

Roman soldier at the London Toy and Model Museum is not so different from the battery-powered Buzz Lightyear figure popular almost 2,000 years later.

The museum's marketing and exhibition manager, Matthew O'Reilly, said the way children play with toys has not fundamentally changed.

"There's only been about five toys ever made...they've just been redeveloped with different outer skins," he said.

But according to one psychologist, modern technology has created a virtual toy like none of its predecessors.

A hundred years ago toy-makers wowed children with wind-up bears using waddling limbs powered by the latest clockwork gadgetry.

They look pretty crude in comparison to "cyberpets" — microchip powered play-



From building block to building byte: Lego is aiming for the computer generation

things like the Tamagotchis from Japan.

These plastic gizmos display an on-screen domestic animal which their owners feed by pressing tiny buttons.

If they are not fed regularly, they slowly die.

"I do actually think they're a new breed of toy...they're very interesting psychologically," Mark Griffiths, a psychologist at Nottingham Trent University, told Reuters.

"Rather than being the master of the toys, to some extent you become a slave to them," he said.

Whatever their merits, the demand for interactive computer games for youngsters is increasing.

"The market is soaring now and it's going to soar further," said a spokesman for the European Leisure Software Publishers Association, citing information from ChartTrak which monitors sales of computer games.

Britons spend an estimated 1.6 billion pounds a year on toys, with around 20 to 60 million pounds paid for hand-

made toys like rocking horses and teddy bears, according to figures from the British Toy-makers' Guild.

Guild Manager Robert Nathan said demand for more traditional, hand-crafted toys was steady.

"Computer games generally are self-limiting, they're only as good as the programmers' imagination," he said.

But children who are increasingly playing with toys made with three-dimensional computer modelling techniques, rather than carpentry skills could be enhancing their minds.

Educational psychologist Jenni Smith said youngsters can expand their abstract reasoning powers through computer games such as the new virtual Lego.

"It exercises the mind in a more mature way," she said. Keith Lambert was unconvinced as he wandered with his nephews into the model-making section of the toyshop.

"I'd much prefer to see them building things with real bricks, but then, I work in the building industry," he said.

Politics in Korea furore

By Elaine Lies
Reuters

RECENT REPORTS in Japan about North Korea deploying medium-range missiles suggest to some analysts that Tokyo may be using an issue to bolster its own defence posture.

A Japanese Self-Defence Forces report saying Rodong-1 missiles, which have a range of 1,300 kilometres, had been developed and deployed got heavy media play this past weekend.

The story drew attention despite the fact analysts in South Korea said the Rodong-1 missiles were assumed to have been deployed soon after their development in around 1993.

With a coalition government set for launch this month involving an opposition party noted for favouring a firmer defence stance, some observers in Japan view the latest furore with scepticism.

"There's a lot of things at work that are putting security on the front burner and it would not surprise me at all if people are working behind the scenes to make something out of this," said John Neuffer, a political analyst at the Misui Marine Research Institute.

"I'd be very surprised if the missile deployment weren't being used as a political tool right now." The ruling Liberal Democratic Party has spent recent months wooing the Liberal Party, an opposition party led by Ichiro Ozawa, a conservative former LDP member and vocal proponent of a greater military role for Japan.

Worldwide concern was touched off by the launch last August of what is believed to have been North Korea's latest generation missile, the Taepodong, but defence analysts said the Rodong issue was more symbolic than

real.

Noting that all of North Korea is within range of a formidable array of weapons held by U.S. Forces based in Japan, defence analyst Kazuhisa Ogawa said: "They know that if they shot off anything they'd be hit really hard in response."

"The issue must be viewed as a threat but little more — there's no real danger from the Rodong," Ogawa said.

A spokesman at Japan's Defence Agency declined to comment on the flurry of media reports on North Korea deploying more missiles.

"These reports are not something we have published. The newspapers obtained this information themselves," he said.

Weekly tabloid magazines have also taken up the story. The latest edition of the weekly Shukan Shincho carried a report alleging North Korean soldiers may already have infiltrated Japan.

Analysts were reluctant to speculate on the origin of the reports, but most agreed the issue had arisen at a convenient time for the government and for the LDP as it seeks a coalition with the Liberals, whose main platform is a stronger Japanese defence.

Seen as a move to accommodate the Liberal Party, the LDP has placed high on the new parliament's agenda bills aimed at pushing through new U.S.-Japan defence cooperation guidelines, which would curtail a wider role for the Japanese military.

Parliament opens on January 19 and debate is likely to be particularly fierce given a recent upsurge in sentiment in favour of rewriting Japan's constitution, which confines its forces to a defensive role.

Far-right conservatives have long called for rewriting the document, which they feel was forced

on them by the U.S.

Occupation authorities who framed it after Japan's defeat in World War II.

Analysts noted a senior Liberal Party official said on Tuesday his party wanted the constitution to be revised, and that he expected a special parliamentary committee to be set up to study it during the next session.

"Certainly there is the problem of the defence guidelines, and there also will be debate about the constitution," said political analyst Kichiya Kobayashi.

"Given these circumstances, I believe there could well be some voices emerging to fan this sort of (security) fear." Another analyst, who declined to be named, said: "Ichiro Ozawa's views on security have been known for years. But the climate created by last year's Taepodong launch has certainly proven to be a good opportunity." That launch forced Japan's Defence Agency to acknowledge that Japan could not defend itself from ballistic missiles.

Only a few weeks later Japan announced it would join the United States in research into a satellite-based Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) system.

Subsequently, the government has said it would develop its first spy satellites.

"There's no question that people in government who have been in favour of systems such as TMD have been handed quite a chance, and they are using it," said Noriyuki Suzuki, chief analyst at the Tokyo-based Radio Press, which specialises in monitoring broadcasts from Pyongyang.

Suzuki said the real concern is whether another Taepodong will be launched, adding: "The Rodong is really not an issue."

To have and to hold: Handbags for posterity

By Richard Chang
Reuters

POP INTO any antique show and it is obvious: Handbags are in — not just the standard variety but also ones that resemble telephones or milk buckets, beaded, buckled, or accented ones and many others.

As fashion has gone retro, so have accessories, to the point that Sotheby's held its first exclusive handbag auction last month. The event raised \$262,545 from the sale of 163 items including an \$11,500 ruby-glazed, bejeweled alligator evening bag that was barely a year old.

"Handbags are getting very collectible now, very hot — even just purse frames

themselves and purses," said "Vintage Purses At Their Best" author Lynell Schwartz. "The fact is that they're getting harder to get and it's a challenge to find them. They're works of art." As a result, vintage handbag prices have risen "much better than 10 per cent a year," and some have doubled or tripled in just a few years, Schwartz said.

Part of the reason is that a small but growing number of women are willing to pay for good designs in a minor revival of the handbag heyday of the booming '80s. "At one time I could buy what I collected for \$100 to \$150," said Karen Davydov, who fancies bags shaped like lobster, boats or other objects. "Now I may see bags for \$300 up to \$1,200." At Sotheby's, striking handbags included a

1998 Jean-Paul Gaultier aluminium bucket with leather straps (\$2,587), a 1998 Kelly Bag by Tom Sachs that is pasted all over with silver duct tape (\$1,725), a Wadsworth compact kit shaped like a camera (\$1,725) and a 1997 Gianni Versace leaf overlaid bag worn by Madonna to the London premiere of "Evita".

Surprisingly, though, the highest prices went to unspectacular leather Kelly Bags by French fashion house Hermes, several of which fetched from \$2,500 to \$10,350.

"The most expensive bags are Hermes, no questions asked," said Joy Liotta Horvath, a designer and owner of The Leather Studio in Southport, Connecticut. "It's a status symbol, unique. Not

everyone knows about it, unlike Louis Vuitton. There's no machine stitching." Even more important for buyers, "Hermes is collectible because you can get a second-hand one cheaper than a new one," she said. Basic designs have barely changed since the 1950s so they are never really out of style. A Hermes Kelly Bag selling for \$4,000 new can be had for \$2,000 to \$2,500 used, she said.

Another ace name is Judith Lieber, maker of rhinestone-studded metal bags shaped like animals and other objects. A glittering Licher panda and a dog sold together for \$4,025 at Sotheby's. An elephant head evening bag adorned with garnets, green onyx and rhinestone trim fetched \$2,185.

"They're expensive to begin with and

will become almost an heirloom item," Horvath said of Lieber handbags.

Among unbranded bags, glass-beaded ones depicting elaborate scenes are the most valuable. Many of these are one-of-a-kind artworks handmade mostly in France, Germany, China and Japan.

"A scenic beaded purse I saw for \$300 to \$400 a couple of years ago is now in the \$1,000 range or more," Schwartz said.

Of course, the beads must all be intact. "If they're not absolutely perfect they're not worth it," Horvath said.

Mesh bags, also called chateleine armour, are back in vogue, with brands such as Mandalay & Hawkins and Whiting & Davis from the 1920s and 1930s among the most popular. Some are enamelled in various colours, giving them a look of woven tapestries. These are worth up to \$350, according to Roseann Ettinger, author of "Handbags."

Mesh bags have become scarce because some of the early ones were used as scouring pads after an article in "Popular Mechanics" in the 1930s advised readers how to scour pots with them when they lost their colour, Schwartz said.

To maintain the condition and value of handbags, experts advise storing them with acid-free tissue and not using them too often. Do not hang heavy purses such as steel-beaded ones because they start pulling away from the frame, Schwartz said.

As for collecting, experts say always buy what you like, not whatever is already in vogue.

"I've always made money for anything that I've bought," Horvath said. "I'm now collecting apple seed purses. In the early 1900s in areas with lots of apples young girls dried apple seeds and strung them like beads to make purses. It's a real American craft form."

World economic growth rate to slip further in 1999 — EIU

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Global economic growth is expected to fall further to 1.3 per cent in 1999, as transition economies led by Russia contract and oil prices collapse in the Middle East, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said in a statement received here Tuesday.

The London-based EIU estimated world economic growth at 1.5 per cent last year, when the full effects of the regional crisis that began in Asia in mid-July 1997 resounded in other parts of the world.

The recession sweeping much of Asia will persist throughout 1999 though "at a less alarm-

ing rate" and the region's gross domestic product (GDP) as a whole will grow by 0.7 per cent in 1999, an improvement from a contraction of 1.6 per cent in 1998, the EIU said in the 1999 edition of its World Outlook.

Among the seven regional groupings surveyed by the EIU, the transition economies in Eastern Europe would contract by 1.0 per cent in 1999, a further decline from 0.5 per cent in 1998, it said.

"The outlook for transition economies will be dominated by the continuing collapse in Russian output," the EIU said.

"Even in the unlikely event that the political situation is sooo stabilised, renewed inflation and declining output are inescapable in 1999," it added.

Major oil exporters in the Middle East are forecast to experience negative growth for the second consecutive year in 1999, EIU said.

But a stronger performance in North Africa would mitigate the downside of a dismal economy in the Middle East, with the combined growth rate in these two areas falling to 0.2 per cent this year from 0.5 per cent a year ago.

The GDP growth rate in Latin America will be

limited to 0.8 per cent this year, down from 2.7 per cent last year, due to tighter monetary and fiscal policy.

North America's GDP growth rate would fall to 1.6 per cent in 1999 from 3.4 per cent a year ago "as weaker equity prices and tighter credit conditions slow domestic demand growth," it said.

The decline in external demand from North America and weaker stock markets and a strong euro would reduce Western Europe's GDP growth to 1.8 per cent in 1999 from 2.6 per cent last year.

With economy shrinking, Russians likely to default on more loans

MOSCOW (AP) — As Russia's economy shrivels, here's the big financial question for 1999: How will Moscow pay back billions of dollars in loans due this year to Western banks and governments?

Answer: It can't. And President Boris Yeltsin's government is making no apologies for its inability to pay.

In fact, Russian officials have accused Western lenders of doling out bad financial advice along with their money, and Moscow has unilaterally announced restructuring plans for some debts, further antagonizing its impatient creditors.

"Contribution does not seem to form part of the Russian psyche," said Eric Kraus, head of fixed income at Dresdner Bank in Moscow. "Russia is in a situation where it can't pay its full debt burden. But the government's attitude has been to tell creditors what it plans to do, and then give them a week or two to accept it."

Russia has run up roughly \$150 billion in debts to Western lenders that have been seeding money throughout this decade to help Russia make the transition to a market economy.

Even as the Russian economy foundered, the loans flowed in because the United States and many

European governments felt Russia was too big, too important, and too unpredictable to be allowed to suffer an economic meltdown.

But after Russia's financial markets crumbled in August, in the wake of the Asian crisis, and the government effectively defaulted on some domestic and foreign debts, the West turned off the money tap for the first time in years.

Russia has missed a number of big debt payments in recent months, and faces \$17.5 billion in foreign debts due this year. The government had said it hoped to repay \$9.5 billion and re-negotiate the rest.

But the government said Tuesday that it planned to spend just \$4.6 billion on foreign debts.

"I think we'll see some more defaults," said Peter Westin, an economist with the Russian European Center for Economic Policy. "Russia simply doesn't have any money and it faces large payments every month this year."

For millions of impoverished Russians, all this talk of high finance seems utterly irrelevant to their daily struggles. For many, Russia's formal economy collapsed years ago, and the notion of going to a factory or an office every day and receiving a regular salary is a distant memory.

These Russians stay a few steps ahead of destitution by growing their own potatoes, by turning their wheezing cars into gypsy taxis, and negotiating all sorts of creative barter deals with friends and neighbors.

Still, the debt negotiations, which promise to be tedious, protracted affairs, are enormously important to Russia.

Yeltsin's government periodically blames the International Monetary Fund and other foreign lenders for Russia's woes. But Moscow needs the money to cover basic expenses such as paying teachers, soldiers and pensioners who already get their money months late.

Also, Russian leaders still see their country as a major international power, and Moscow needs good working relations with Western financial institutions if Russia wants to be a full-fledged member of the global economy.

After nearly a decade of recession, one of the worst ever endured by an industrialized nation, Russia's economic decline is difficult to overstate.

This year, the country's overall economic output is forecast to fall well below that of Belgium. Russia's 146 million people are expected to produce an economy worth only \$175 billion, while Belgium's 10

million people are expected to crank out \$272 billion worth of output.

Russia also has a large shadow economy that's impossible to measure, but even that only marginally improves the bleak picture.

As Yeltsin's government tries to figure out how to pay all its bills, here's another sobering thought: Russia's national budget this year, which is equal to \$26 billion, can't match the sum the U.S. government spends in a typical week: \$32 billion.

With so few resources, Russia's apparent debt strategy is to stay current on obligations run up this decade, totaling about \$50 billion, while it is likely to default on much of the Soviet-era debt it inherited, debt of about \$100 billion.

Many Western governments and banks are already prepared to write off these loans. But the Russian media has speculated that some creditors may try to seize Russian property abroad, a charge the Finance Ministry denies.

"Russia has taken a series of civilized steps to solve this difficult debt problem," the Finance Ministry said. "There is no question of any declaration of default that could be accompanied by arresting accounts and property of the Russian Federation abroad."

Emir calls on Kuwaitis to tighten their belts

KUWAIT (AFP) — Kuwait's ruler, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah, called on his people Monday to tighten their belts and reform an economy largely dependent on sales of crude oil.

"We need to restructure the national economy... resolve our problems with lucidity and awareness and find objective solutions to unity," the official KUNA news agency quoted him as saying.

The emir urged Kuwaitis to stop living in luxury and extravagance as if the country had not been affected by the seven-month Iraqi occupation from August 1990 and the slump in the price of oil, which accounts for 80 per cent of the national budget.

"Those who do not wake up in time will be swept away by the torrent," he warned.

A reform plan still to be approved by parliament envisages raising the price of water and electricity, fuel, customs duties and medical services for non-nationals.

Kuwaiti citizens, who make up only a third of the population, live in the ultimate welfare state, with no income tax, free medical care and education, guaranteed employment, heavily-subsidized housing and low-priced utilities and fuel.

The drop in oil prices has hit resources hard and the budget deficit for the current fiscal year through July next year is put at six billion dollars.

Exchange Rates Tuesday, 12-01-99 ACCESS 4648868									
CURRENCY	JORDAN	SAUDI	EGYPT	IRAN	YEMEN	OMAN	QATAR	BAHRAIN	UAE
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8778	1.8389	0.1945	2.3424	0.2077	0.7080
SAUDI RYAL	5.2862	1.0000	1.0206	8.9451	8.7382	1.0299	12.4060	1.1000	3.7407
EGYPT POUND	0.1881	0.1938	1.0000	9.7422	9.5405	1.0088	12.1529	1.0776	3.6762
IRAN RIAL	0.5325	0.1036	0.1036	1.0000	0.8793	0.1036	1.2474	0.1108	0.3770
YEMEN RIAL	0.5456	0.1027	0.1027	1.0211	1.0000	0.1057	1.2738	0.1129	0.3850
OMAN RIAL	0.1427	0.9710	0.9912	9.6566	8.4569	1.0000	12.0463	1.0891	3.6410
QATAR RIAL	0.4289	0.0806	0.0823	8.0018	0.7850	0.0830	10.0000	0.0887	0.3023
BAHRAIN DINAR	0.4814	0.0901	0.0920	9.0407	8.8535	0.9362	11.9778	1.0588	3.4581
UAE DIRHAM	21.4831	4.0563	4.1408	40.3405	39.5055	4.1774	50.3228	4.4821	15.2700
LIBYAN DINA	1.4124	0.2667	0.2722	2.5973	2.5973	0.2746	3.3085	0.2834	1.0000
US DOLLAR	0.8673	0.1638	0.1672	1.6286	1.5949	0.1687	2.0316	0.1801	0.6141
BRITISH STERLING	2.4050	0.4537	0.4652	4.5123	4.4198	0.4673	5.6288	0.4991	1.7013
GERMAN MARK	1.9774	0.3724	0.3811	3.7131	3.6363	0.3845	4.6319	0.4107	1.4000
FRANCE FRANC	0.0592	1.5217	1.5534	15.1334	14.8201	1.5671	18.8781	1.6738	5.7058
JAPAN YEN	1.5895	0.3001	0.3084	2.9848	2.9230	0.3091	3.7234	0.3302	1.1256
HOLLAND GILDER	2.8843	0.5058	0.5174	5.0456	4.9352	0.5220	6.2578	0.5575	1.9035
SWEDEN KRONA	11.1403	2.1634	2.1473	20.8180	20.4650	2.1682	26.0953	2.3130	7.8673
ITALY LIRA	23.7895	4.4818	4.5854	44.6718	43.7469	4.6258	55.7254	4.9412	16.8430
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	48.9082	8.2348	8.4289	81.6391	80.9379	8.5103	104.5641	10.1584	34.6270
CANADA DOLLAR	2.2149	0.4182	0.4289	4.1591	4.0730	0.4307	5.1852	0.4600	1.5891
INDONESIA RUPIAH	3.9812	0.7517	0.7674	7.4759	7.3211	0.7442	8.8237	0.7592	2.5100
THAI BATH	2.6836	0.5067	0.5173	5.0383	4.9349	0.5218	6.2882	0.5574	1.9000
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	16.6760	3.1491	3.2146	31.3176	30.6983	3.2431	39.0670	3.4641	11.8000
FINLAND MARKKA	2.1236	0.4021	0.4109	3.9986	3.9160	0.4141	4.9683	0.4423	1.5077
EURO	1.2295	0.2320	0.2388	2.3071	2.2593	0.2388	2.8780	0.2552	0.8699

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR									
CURRENCY	1 JD	100 JD	1000 JD	10000 JD	100000 JD	1000000 JD	10000000 JD	100000000 JD	1000000000 JD
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.8285	0.5876	0.7143	0.7753	0.8886	0.5282	5.5972	1.7488
BRITISH STERLING	0.6141	1.0000	0.3699	0.4386	0.4708	0.5458	0.3251	3.4659	0.7080
GERMAN MARK	1.7013	2.7705	1.0000	1.2152	1.2962	1.5117	0.8952	10.1008	1.9589
SWITZERLAND FR.	1.4000	2.2789	0.8229	1.0000	1.0544	1.2440	0.7386	8.3121	1.5934
FRANCE FRANC	5.7058	8.2821	3.3538	4.0756	4.3500	5.0701	3.0023	33.8770	6.5969
JAPAN YEN	112.5400	183.2714	86.1494	80.3857	19.7234	1.0000	86.1494	80.3857	19.7234
HOLLAND GILDER	1.9005	3.0850	1.1771	1.3575	1.4531	1.6887	1.0000	11.2838	2.1848
INDONESIA RUPIAH	1.8273	13.8445	4.9350	5.8338	6.3823	7.0084	4.1591	45.8294	9.0672
ITALY LIRA	16.8430	27.4268	8.9001	12.0307	12.9818	14.9662	8.8624	100.0000	18.2027
LIBYAN DINA	34.8270	56.3801	20.3533	24.7336	26.0888	30.7896	18.2199	205.5870	39.8072
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	1.5681	2.5537	0.9217	1.1201	1.2148	1.3934	0.8251	9.3103	1.8027
CANADA DOLLAR	2.8187	4.5950	1.5598	2.0134	2.1450	2.5448	1.4831	16.7292	3.2829
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	1.9000	3.0850	1.1771	1.3575	1.4531	1.6887	1.0000	11.2838	2.1848
FINLAND MARKKA	11.8000	18.2027	6.9406	8.4343	9.0984	10.4623	6.2131	70.1083	13.9745
EURO	1.5077	2.4553	0.8862	1.0788	1.1525	1.3372	0.7933	8.8915	1.7333
EURO	0.8699	1.4188	0.5113	0.6213	0.6725	0.7729	0.4577	5.1645	1.0000

WORLD STOCK MARKETS									
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST	CHANGE	PRECIOUS METALS	PRICE	LAST	CHANGE	PRICE
FRANKFURT	DAX	5770.00	5762.94	-12.24	PLATINUM	361.00	363.00		
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	10034.27	10023.30	-48.43	SILVER	5.30	5.38		
LONDON	FT-100	5147.20	5101.20	-46.00					
NEW YORK	DJ IND.	9518.80	9543.32	-23.43					
NEW YORK	NYSE COMP.	804.09	811.06	-7.03					
NEW YORK	AMEX COMP.	707.32	707.30	-0.44					
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1253.81	1275.88	-11.28					
TOKYO	Nikkei-225	13363.46	13363.46	-7.81					
PARIS	CAC 40	4201.40	4205.40	-43.52					
FRANKFURT	CONVECTANK	4861.20	4861.20	0.00					

Indonesia budget aims at poor, slow recovery

JAKARTA (R) — An emotional President B.J. Habibie has unveiled his first budget, promising millions of impoverished Indonesians more help and managing at the same time to keep sceptical financial markets fairly happy.

"They're focusing much more on the social safety net, which is good news, given the need to maintain social stability. But its not

as populist as it could have been," Neil Saker, senior economist with S.G. Securities in Singapore, said.

"The estimates are conservative. With unity and hard work and restoring a feeling of safety and stability, there is a big chance we can achieve a better situation," Habibie said in a televised budget speech of the country's new economic targets.

His voice faltered and he wiped tears from his eyes as he spoke of Indonesia's slow recovery during the past year.

"The social safety net remains a top priority in 1999/2000 expenditure," the government said in its main budget document.

At least half of the country's 200 million people now live below the poverty line.

The budget for the year starting in April targets a hefty budget deficit of around 4.8 per cent of gross domestic product which would have to be covered by massive new foreign loans.

It also predicts that GDP growth will hit zero in the year to end-March 2000, after a brutal contraction estimated at 12 per cent this fiscal year.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

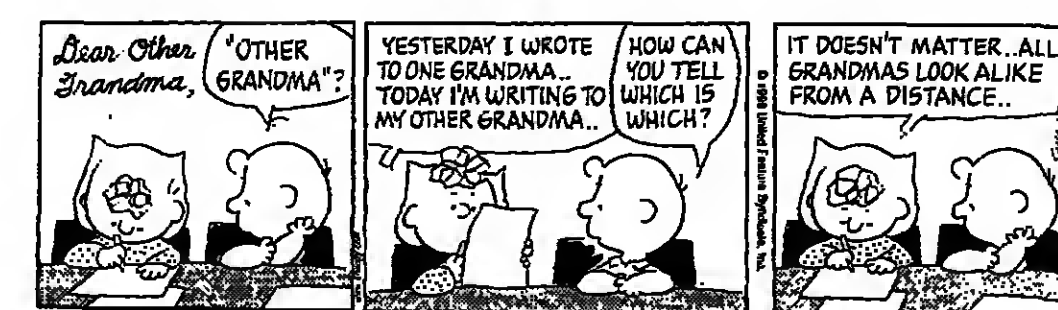
ACROSS

- Damage
- Scheduled next
- Grp. of oil producers
- Lamb's pen name
- San... CA
- Cold feet
- Renowned cookie man?
- Greek cheese
- Related product
- Funny fall
- Confine, as a pig
- Barbershop lady?
- Attaches firmly
- Island off
- Domegal
- Upper limb
- Mollycoddles
- Jolly name for a flag
- Bring up
- Actor George
- Town in N. France
- "West Side Story" song
- Caroline rails
- Bear: Sp.
- Goes one better
- Frightened
- Line from "Romeo and Juliet"
- Kubrick's "computer"
- Eye in AIX
- Expert
- So be it
- Furtive moonshiner?
- Fasten wing-tips
- Haute, IN
- Cupid
- Actress
- Sommer
- Up end about
- Go on a tirade

DOWN

- Determine weight by lifting
- Jai... (sport)
- Hoarfrost
- Shining Path comrades
- G's garb
- Long of "Boyz n the Hood"
- Be inviting
- Spartan market
- Spanish Christmas festival
- Slightly askew
- Surprising
- Consumed
- Wading bird
- Single
- Nat's property
- Son of Seth
- Sen. Kefauver
- Neighbor of Vietnam
- Use the earth
- Vicinity
- Wise guy?
- Self-esteem
- Transparent wrap
- Different
- Crude cross
- Mob meles
- Los Angeles
- Baseball teams
- Ready to go
- Also
- Blammin'
- English school
- Avian abode
- French born
- Actress Meyers
- Moby Dick, e.g.
- Punk starter?

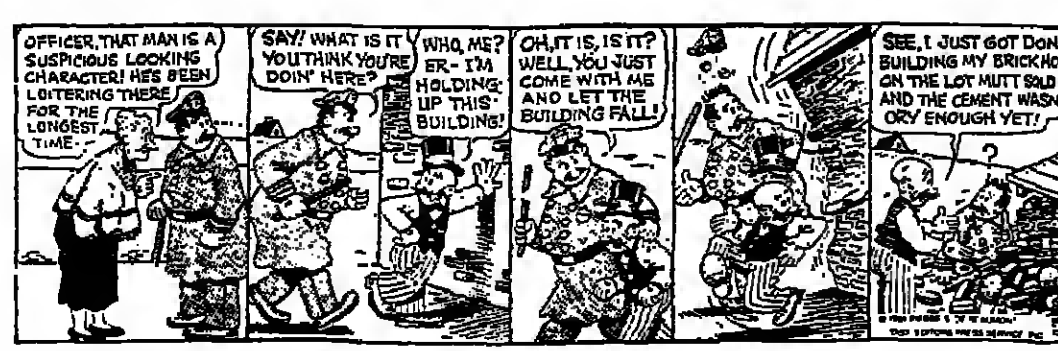
Peanuts



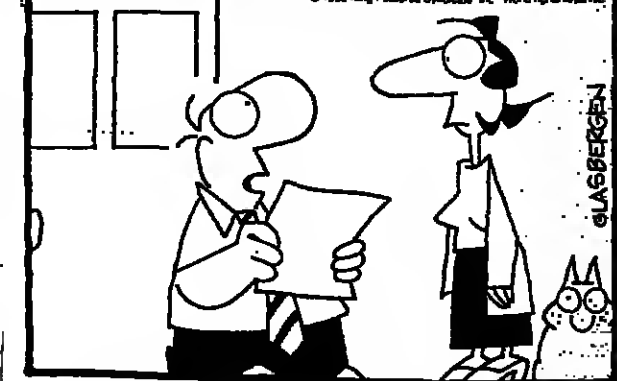
Andy Capp



Mutt'n Jeff



THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

MERIN

CHELE

PENMAD

KOTLEC

Print answer here: THEY

Yesterday's Jumbles: OOWNY PECAN EVOLVE RENDER

Answer: Threading a needle can be this — AN "EYE" OPENER

Business

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Trade with Israel rises 30%

**** VOLUME OF** trade between Jordan and Israel totalled \$30 million during the first nine months of 1998. Israel's Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky told Alam Al Tijarat in an interview this month. He indicated that the amount represents a 30 per cent increase over the figure recorded during the same period in 1997. He noted that the volume of trade during the whole of 1997 and 1998 amounted to \$30 million and \$14 million respectively.

Sharansky described the volume of trade as low and said it did not utilise the full capabilities noting that the trade agreement between Jordan and Israel took effect in April 1996. He said that there is wide interest among businessmen in both countries as to the commercial possibilities and economic cooperation. The minister said Israeli exports to Jordan are mainly mechanical equipment, agricultural seeds, metals and chemical products. "An interesting fact is that Israeli imports from Jordan are also in the same fields," he added.

Sharansky blamed a number of heads of economic organisations for considering trade with Israel as illegitimate and, consequently, for preventing potential Jordanian businessmen from dealing with Israel. "We should all remember that after approximately 50 of total economic alienation it is not expected that impediments will be penetrated at once

and that all psychological barriers disappear," he emphasised. Sharansky did not expect trade exchange with Jordan to rise sharply but saw a reasonable rise of between 10 and 15 per cent.

Asked about what could be done to boost trade exchange, the Israeli minister mentioned "educational seminars that focus on developing commercial means which can very possibly be used for import/export by the two sides." He said that in each country there are export institutions, chambers of commerce, industrial federations and similar institutions which each can function as an organiser for meetings, seminars and reconciliation gatherings among companies.

Replying to a question about encouraging investments in the region, Sharansky said both Israel and Jordan are trying to lure foreign investors and that each of them has developed an excellent and successful package of laws designed to encourage investments. "In this context, there is a possibility to establish cooperation between the Jordanian and Israeli leaderships and to embark on roadshows to detect the relative advantages for each of the two countries within a framework of cooperation," he added. However, the most important step would be to sign a free trade agreement between Jordan and Israel, Sharansky said (Alam Al Tijarat).

Euro continues to boost European bond markets

PARIS (AFP) — European bond markets continued to rise on Monday because foreign investors are buying European instruments owing to the launch of the euro in a massive switch of investment into the euro zone, dealers said on Monday.

But they warned of growing alarm about debt conditions in Brazil and Russia.

At MPE Tresorerie in Paris, Philippe Peretiere said: "European bond markets are again showing growing independence of the big American brother."

Strong health of the U.S. economy, demonstrated by many indicators last week, one of which being unemployment data, had boosted share prices on Wall Street to the disadvantage of bonds.

But in Europe government bonds continued to rise or remained very strong, being supported by a favourable outlook for the economy in terms of low inflation and interest rates.

Foreign investors continue to give pride of place to the euro zone in a vast and profound reallocation of portfolio funds.

Deutsche Morgan Grenfell said that German

investors were buying French OAT bonds.

On Monday, the French treasury was issuing as usual bonds to raise 800 million euros (5923 million for 13 weeks and 500 million euros for 45 weeks, and the U.S. treasury was issuing bonds to raise \$16 billion for three and six months.

On Tuesday, Japan is to issue six-year bonds to raise 900 billion yen, and Italy is to issue 15.5 billion euros for three and 12 months, 2.5 billion euros for 18 months and three billion euros for 24 months.

The Netherlands is to issue bonds to raise 2.5 billion euros for 10 years.

On Thursday, Italy returns to raise about six billion euros with instruments for three, five and 30 years.

The Japanese bond market fell again on Monday owing to an expected increase of lenders in Japan this week.

At CIC, bond analyst Ciaran O'Hagan said that the market, and notably dealers in the United States, was beginning to be seriously worried about Brazil.

The credit rating for Brazil might be weakened by a debt moratorium of 90 days announced on January 6 by the state

of Minas Gerais, Standard and Poor's said on Friday.

If the situation in Brazil worsened, investors would switch massively into short-term investments, to the cost of stocks and bonds.

O'Hagan said that already investors were beginning to move out of the riskiest bonds into safe instruments such as German bunds.

And in Russia foreign exchange dealers said that a continuing fall of the ruble advanced possibility of default on Russia's vast foreign debt, put by official figures at \$150 billion.

One trader, who declined to be named, said: "The ruble slump is very bad for foreign debt servicing."

On the German market the March Bund contract on the Eures market fell by four basis points to 116.79 points and the yield on the 10-year Bund dated July 2008 fell to 3.772 per cent from 3.775 per cent on Friday.

On the French market the euro notional contract on the Matif market, reflecting 10-year interest rates, rose by six basis points to 112.39 points. The yield on the benchmark OAT dated October 2008 fell to 3.79 per cent

from 3.799 per cent.

On the short-term market, the March Euribor contract on the Matif rose by one point to 96.92. The three-month Euribor contract had fallen to 3.196 per cent on Friday from 3.206 per cent on Thursday.

In London the March gilt contract on the Little market fell by 10 basis points to 119.54. The yield on the 10-year gilt dated October 1998 rose to 4.26 per cent from 4.25 per cent.

In the United States the yield on benchmark 30-year treasury bonds rose to 5.281 per cent from 5.256 per cent late on Friday.

The CBOT T-Bond contract dated March had ended on Friday with a slump of 81 cents to 125.72.

A.F.M. TRADE Tuesday, 12-01-99

Company	Open	Close	Change
BANKS			
ARAB BK	215,000	215,000	-0.46%
INTL BK	1,560	1,540	-1.28%
BK OF JO	1,230	1,230	0.00%
THE HOUSING BK	2,760	2,740	-0.36%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1,640	1,630	-0.61%
JO. GULF BK	0,570	0,700	+4.43%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1,650	1,650	0.00%
JO. INVEST. & IN. BK	1,400	1,370	-2.14%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0,550	0,540	-1.82%
BANKS INDEX	280.940	POINT=	-0.46%
INSURANCE			
JO. FRENCH INS	2,700	2,700	0.00%
AHLIA INS	1,170	1,110	-5.13%
INSURANCE INDEX	125.090	POINT=	-0.27%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1,700	1,680	-1.18%
IRBID ELECTRICITY	1,660	1,700	+2.41%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0,790	0,790	0.00%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0,900	0,900	0.00%
ARAB INTL. FOR INVS. &	1,950	1,940	-0.51%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1,150	1,140	-0.87%
SERVICES INDEX	110.450	POINT=	-0.36%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3,550	3,370	-5.07%
PHOSPHATE	1,680	1,720	+2.38%
ARAB POTASH	3,320	3,240	-2.41%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10,570	10,550	-0.19%
THE INO. COMMA. AGRIC	1,060	1,060	+1.89%
WORSTED MILLS	6,380	6,060	-5.02%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2,830	2,810	-0.71%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1,210	1,210	0.00%
RAFIA	0,530	0,530	0.00%
DAR AL DAWA	5,150	5,150	0.00%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0,550	0,550	0.00%
JO. STEEL	0,980	0,960	-2.04%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0,390	0,390	0.00%
PETRO-CHEMICAL	0,320	0,320	0.00%
CHEMICAL & VEGETABL	0,950	0,940	-1.05%
ROCKWOOL	0,290	0,290	0.00%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	1,020	1,010	-0.98%
NYL CABLE	0,640	0,640	0.00%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHAR	1,240	1,230	-0.81%
EL-ZAY	1,330	1,330	0.00%
IND. RESOURCES	0,440	0,440	0.00%
NEW CAPLES	0,620	0,620	0.00%
NYL ALUMINIUM	0,630	0,630	0.00%
INDUSTRY INDEX	83.000	POINT=	-1.10%
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK (75	0,890	0,880	-1.12%
CENTRAL STORG	0,330	0,350	+6.06%
UNION INVS. CORP	0,690	0,700	+1.45%
AL-SHARQ	1,040	1,030	-0.96%
MACHINERY EQUIP	0,490	0,470	-4.08%
NAMICO	0,250	0,250	0.00%
TEXTILE & PLASTIC	0,280	0,280	0.00%
UNION TOBACCO	2,860	3,000	+4.90%
AL-RAZI	0,540	0,540	0.00%
INTL CERAMIC	0,410	0,400	-2.44%
PEARL	0,450	0,450	0.00%
INTL DAR	0,720	0,730	+1.39%
GRAND INDEX	173.01	POINT=	-0.61%

GM unveils new small car project aimed at greater profitability

DETROIT, Michigan (AFP) — General Motors (GM) on Monday unveiled a new project based on modular component assembly and co-design with suppliers to return profitability to its ailing small car sector.

"Project Yellowstone" features new concepts in product development and manufacturing. Mark Hogan, GM vice president for small car operations, told the Automotive News World Congress here.

"We cannot afford to lose money on small cars any more," Hogan told the congress, which brings together top executives of the world's leading car-makers.

"All elements of GM's business must contribute — including small cars," he said.

GM is the world's largest automaker. But in recent years it has lost market share to its main rivals because it has been slower in trimming its bloated workforce and modernizing its assembly operations.

Hogan said conventional approaches such as global converged platforms, global purchasing based

on material cost benchmarking, math-based engineering and a strong focus on common manufacturing processes and materials had saved GM hundreds of millions of dollars.

"But it was not enough to make GM profitable in small cars in today's competitive environment."

"So we pulled together a group to explore new approaches using proven, successful best-practice engineering and manufacturing concepts from throughout the world," he said.

The goal was to conceive a system allowing us to build small cars profitably at today's pricing levels.

"We needed a total production system that was leaner, faster and more flexible in order to respond to an ever-changing market and fast-moving competition," he added.

"If we come together in an agreement with our union partners, we hope to have a decision for a Yellowstone plant in the U.S. in the near future," he noted.

He said decisions on

plant locations and product allocations could be announced in 90 days.

Typical Yellowstone plant capacity would be about 215,000 vehicles a year.

"The most productive small-car plants in the world are hitting over 100 vehicles per person per year, and that's our target with Yellowstone," Hogan said.

"A great deal needs to be done to bring together a new plant, a new product and a new culture."

The changes would require fewer job classifications and significant investments in additional training.

Hogan pledged to involve GM's union partners in the process to adapt the U.S. manufacturing network, and said discussions were under way with the leadership of the United Auto Workers union.

He said the Delta model, a future global small car program that has received conditional approval from GM's Board of Directors, could be the first full execution of Project Yellowstone.

Airbus has 98 orders worth \$39b, turnover \$13.3b

PARIS (R1) — Europe's Airbus consortium reported on Monday record 1998 aircraft orders worth \$39 billion.

Airbus Industrie said it received firm orders for 556 passenger jets in 1998, 100 fewer than the 656 orders worth \$42.1 billion announced by Boeing Co last Thursday.

Airbus's 1998 turnover totalled \$13.3 billion, with 229 aircraft delivered, up from \$11.6 billion in 1997. Its outstanding orderbook stood at 1,309 aircraft, worth \$92.7 billion, representing more than four years of production.

"The 1998 total firm orders furthermore represent the equivalent of the consortium's total sales over the first 17 years of existence," Airbus said in a statement.

Airbus delivered 168 narrow-body jets in its A320 range, compared to 127 in 1997, and 61 A330/340 wide-bodies, versus 55.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR JANUARY, WEDNESDAY 13, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) There's somebody out there you've been thinking about, somebody you'd like to talk to, but you're a little shy. Maybe it's an argument you had that needs clearing up. At any rate, this is a fine time to clean up old messes. You may be surprised at the response you get, because it'll be all good. So, go ahead and make the call.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You may be in for a surprise today. Something you thought was too expensive could actually be affordable. And something you thought you could afford might be nickel-and-dimeing you to death. Look at your own money as if it belonged to somebody else. That will help you figure out what you can afford and how you can pay it back.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You're in an inquisitive frame of mind today, and that's good. You'll make some really interesting discoveries. A person you've worked with before knows quite a few things you've been trying to figure out the hard way, so go ahead and ask. You may be surprised at how simple a seemingly complex matter can be, once you know how to do it.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You have a routine you like to follow, and you'll be dreaming about it today, as everything falls apart before your very eyes. There are surprises left and right and you're caught in the middle. Don't get upset. You can handle even the biggest of messes, especially if you have a little warning, and that's what you're getting right here.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Most of the difficult stuff has been handled by now. The next thing to do is celebrate, relax, have some fun and listen to a few jokes. There's one person in particular who always keeps you laughing. This is the guy or gal to hang around with today. You deserve a break, and this person always helps you find one.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) Your place could be in a bit of an uproar, but that's OK. Sometimes you have to stir things up in order to get them exactly the way you want. In this case, it could be different from the way it was before. Don't worry. If you think it looks good, your friends and family will, too. Your taste is impeccable.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 21) You're in the mood to ask questions, and you could get some interesting answers. A person you thought you knew, very well could surprise you. The truth is starting to come out, and you simply won't settle for anything else, especially now. You hate to make waves, but face it. You love justice even more.

SCORPIO: (October 22 to November 21) "Show me the money" — that's your motto today. You've had it with promises. What you need now is reality. You want that check to actually clear the bank before you'll do any more work for whoever's been selling you a bill of goods. If there's any ambiguity at all, clear it up right now.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're large and in charge today. You're in control of the situation. Actually, it's more like you're steering the ship. Things are changing fast. If you stay focused on the goal, you can make it through this adventure and to your destination safely. Stay loose, be creative, act quickly and don't give up.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If you've got any secrets, you'd better keep them hidden. Even so, you could still get a reputation for doing something you've never thought about, much less did. That's the way the rumors are going to fly today. Counsel those people who have a tendency to blab to stay calm and wait for the facts to come in.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You've got the data and all the tools you need today, but what you don't quite have is the willingness to look outside the nine dots. Do you know that puzzle? You have to connect nine dots. Do you know that puzzle? It seems impossible, unless you get a with one straight line. It seems impossible, unless you get a paintbrush that's wider than the nine dots. That's the kind of answer you'll find today.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Secrets are being revealed, dirty laundry is being aired, people are finding out all kinds of things they probably wish they didn't know. This does not affect you directly. You're lucky. It looks like you'll benefit from this situation, so you can tell everybody to be calm. Tell them things will work out all right, and you can really mean it.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

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The NBA has lost His Airness — source

CHICAGO (AP) — For six months, Michael Jordan teased, taunted and tantalised a nation awaiting his answer. At last, he appears to have one.

The greatest player in the history of professional basketball and the most popular athlete since Muhammad Ali is expected to announce his retirement Wednesday, a source with close ties to the National Basketball Association told The Associated Press on Monday night.

If so, it would be the second time in five years that Jordan has walked away from the game he redefined.

"This is a man who truly, as far as I'm concerned, is the modern day Babe Ruth," Los Angeles Lakers vice president Jerry West said recently.

A number of factors — his age (35), a new coach, a picture-perfect ending last season as the Chicago Bulls captured their sixth title with Jordan, the labour dispute that delayed this season — appear to have influenced his decision.

And like last time, Jordan could change his mind and return.

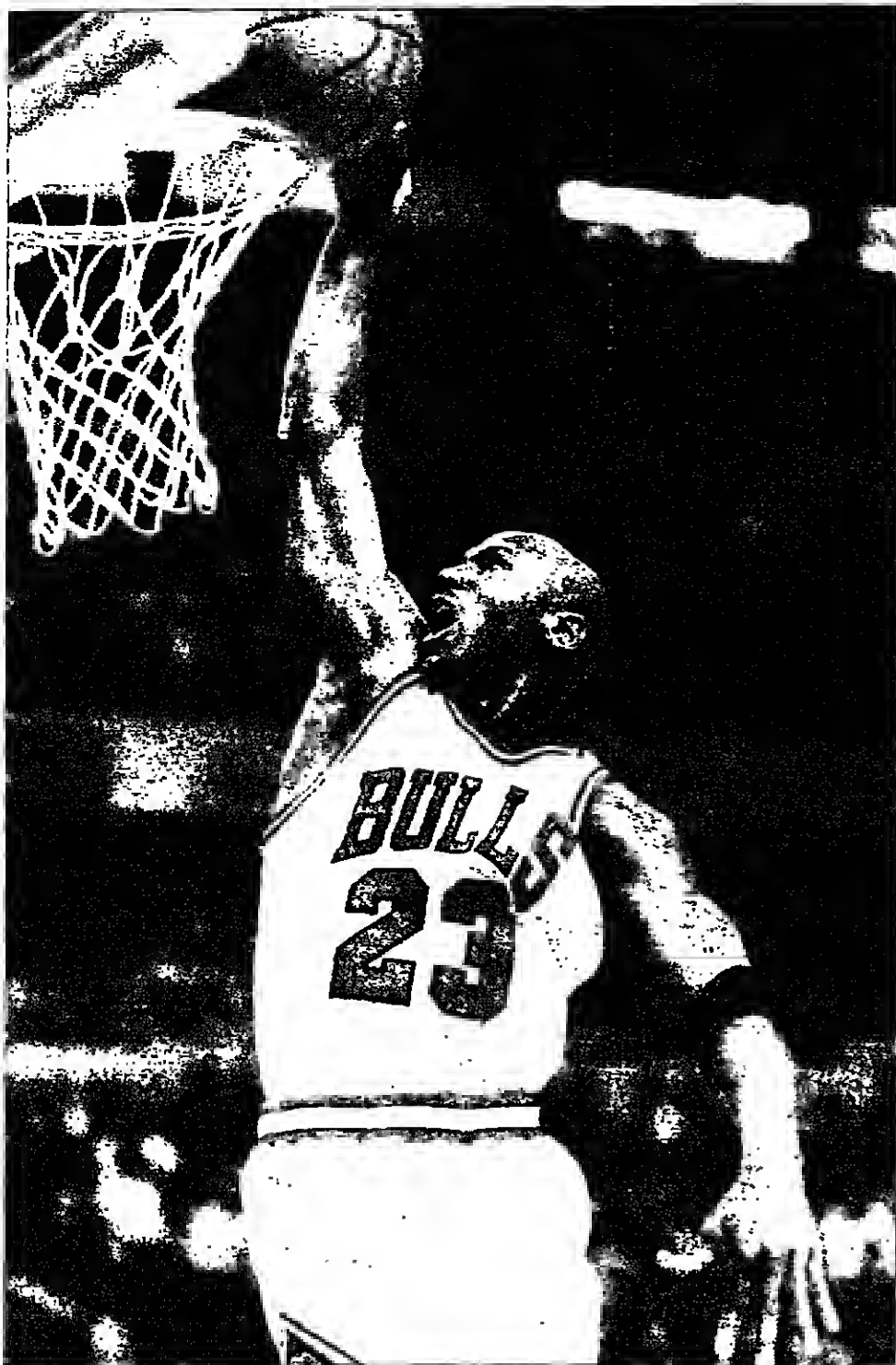
But for now, he is expected to leave the game when he's at the top, the way he said he would. Besides the six titles, the five-time league Most Valuable Player led the Bulls in scoring 10 times in 13 seasons and averaged 31.5 points per game, best in league history.

Jordan did not return a message and Bulls owner Jerry Reinsdorf declined comment. The retirement story was reported by several media organisations.

Speculation over Jordan's future intensified last week, when the NBA players and owners reached a settlement to end a six-month lockout.

With NBA players preparing for an abbreviated season to begin Feb. 5, Jordan was expected to announce his plans before training camps opened Monday. He had been in the Bahamas, but returned to Chicago this week.

Jordan retired for the first time in October 1993, shortly after his father's murder, saying he accomplished everything he wanted to in basketball, and planned to devote more time to his family. Instead, he spent 1994 playing minor league baseball for the Birmingham Barons, a farm team of the Chicago



File photo shows Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls as he dunks the ball unchallenged in the first quarter of the Bulls' 15 March 1997 game against the Atlanta Hawks at the United Center in Chicago, Ill. Jordan will retire from the sport, New York Times said quoting three unidentified National Basketball Association (NBA) officials (AFP photo)

White Sox. He returned to basketball in 1995, but learned he could no longer dominate the game the way he once did. The Bulls were knocked out of the playoffs — and Jordan went back to work to sharpen his skills.

The Bulls then won three straight titles, capped last June in Utah with Jordan stealing the ball and making the game-clinching shot in the final seconds — one of the most memorable sequences of his memorable career.

His decision to retire leaves the NBA in the lurch. Coming off a divisive labour fight that left fans more apathetic than angry, Jordan was the one drawing card that could have helped the league regain its popularity.

"If he's finished, we're the ones who are at a loss, the fans who enjoyed him and the players who played with him and against him," Suns owner Jerry Colangelo said.

After Magic Johnson and Larry Bird helped lift pro basketball's profile in the early 1980s, Jordan took it to the next level almost single-handedly.

He also took the game itself above the rim, inspiring the generation of players who followed him to devise more and more spectacular moves. Every night of the NBA season yielded a bonanza of highlight-reel clips and when they were packaged on sports programmes, the league's popularity soared along with the players.

Jordan pulled player

salaries into the stratosphere as well.

He made more than \$30 million in each of the last two seasons and players like Shaquille O'Neal and Kevin Garnett rode his coattails to secure \$100 million deals.

Last June, Fortune magazine totaled what it called "The Jordan Effect," putting his impact on the economy, since joining the NBA in 1984, at \$10 billion. It calculated he sold an extra \$165 million in tickets for the league, and delivered an extra \$366 million in revenue, mostly in added TV money and the sale of merchandise.

Nike, among the most prominent of the companies who bired him as an endorser, has sold more than \$2.6 billion worth of Jordan-related products.

Remembering many of the moments from an outstanding career

CHICAGO (AP) — That final shot seemed to hang in the air forever.

Was Michael Jordan telling us something as he watched it settle through the net, his right wrist cocked in a follow-through for several satisfying seconds?

On that night last June in Salt Lake City, he was savouring it, it seemed, the final seconds of his life in the NBA.

And on Wednesday, Jordan is expected to make it official. He plans to announce his retirement, a source with close ties to the NBA told The Associated Press on Monday night.

Turns out that jumper was a perfect ending — another last-second, game-clinching shot to win a championship for the Chicago Bulls, a basket that would not only cap his remarkable, unparalleled career but also one that would symbolise and define it.

"He made his last shot to win a world championship," longtime Jordan friend and opponent Charles Barkley said last month. "What more do you need? That's every player's fantasy."

He succeeded so often because attempting that game-deciding shot, pulling out a victory when it was so in doubt, was what Jordan was all about.

"Best There Ever Was, Best There Ever Will Be," reads the inscription on Jordan's statue outside the United Center, erected there in 1994 during his first retirement.

The words were perfect, describing a superstar who defined basketball for an entire decade.

Jordan led the Bulls to six NBA titles — three straight and three more after he returned. He won two Olympic gold medals, and his last-second jumper as a skinny freshman in 1982 gave North Carolina's Dean Smith his first NCAA title. He captured 10 scoring titles, was selected MVP of the league five times and won the same award during the finals all six times he competed.

His playoff scoring average is the highest ever, and he is line to finish as the No. 3 scorer in NBA history.

But there was so much more that defined Jordan.

The smile, the wagging tongue on the way to a dunk, the sweaty head glaring in the lights, the stylish suits, the fashionable ear wear, the victory cigars, the golf forays, the trash talk, the scowling, the unreal pictures of him hovering above the rim, suspended in air during the slam dunk contest, the incredulous glance at officials who would dare to make a call against him.

The faithful son mourning his slain father, the retiree, the would-be baseball player. And then back to the ultimate performer and showman in the game he ruled like no other player.

The fans lining up for a snapshot, an autograph, a glimpse of this legend in long shorts, all but bowing down at his statue outside the United Center.

The rock star treatment on the road and at home.

Who could forget the evening in 1995 when rumors of his return were rampant through a city that worshipped him. Within minutes, two city blocks were mobbed by thousands just hoping to glimpse him as he departed a downtown Chicago hotel where he held an office.

The hype, the nights of room service when being a normal person was impossible, the endless questions about every aspect of his life, the criticism of his gambling and the accusations that his athletic apparel company was using sweatshop labour.

Movie star, subject of numerous books, the man everyone — actors, athletes and politicians — wanted to meet. The athlete every kid wanted to emulate. Just to "Be Like Mike," even if it was on a pretend playground.

The mind-boggling business empire he created with his name and his persona and his dazzling string of endorsements for a variety of products. His \$10 billion impact, according to one financial magazine, on the economy.

He was as big as Babe Ruth, as well-known as Muhammad Ali, more popular than Arnold Palmer, as world-famous as Frank Sinatra or Elvis.

At 35 he could still play his game better than anyone. His skills were not the same as they were 10 years ago, but he compensated by using his experience to take him where his legs no longer would.

But this time, apparently, it was time.

There was nothing else left to prove.

When he retired the first time in October 1993, he thought there was little left to motivate him, his father's public mur-

der giving him a different perspective on what was important.

He went away and he came back. Save for a brief period at the end of the 1995 season when his skills were still rusty, he was not a shadow of what he once was.

So many athletes retire and then return yearning for what they left behind. But Jordan did come back and his reputation — except for that one brief period — didn't waver as he added three more championships.

"He's always said he wants to leave on top. What better way?" teammate Steve Kerr said.

"I wouldn't miss it at all, as much as you may think," Jordan said after vanquishing the Utah Jazz in the 1998 Finals, the Bulls' sixth title in their run through the 90s.

The year before, he beat the same team with a last-second pass to Kerr; this time he sliced their hearts, first with a steal and then another, in-your-face, you-can't-stop-me game-winner.

"Sure, I may have some (nostalgia) when it comes back to this time of the season, but I've got enough memories to suffice and overcome that," he said.

"Have another life. And I know I have to get to it at some point in time. Hopefully the fans and the people understand that."

After ending his first retirement, he had some incredible moments — beating Atlanta at the buzzer in his fourth game back, scoring 55 points against New York three nights later, helping the Bulls win 13 of their last 17 regular-season games and leading Chicago past Charlotte in the first round of the playoffs.

But his memories were of shooting 41 per cent from the floor, of making crucial mistakes during the Bulls' six-game playoff loss to Orlando and of hearing some members of the media say he could never again be the Jordan who carried Chicago to NBA titles in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

He also was criticised for changing uniform numbers during the playoffs. And his off-season included an unsuccessful bid to decertify the players union.

But then he took a summer to rehearse his game, revisit his skills. He came back stronger and more determined than ever.

Surrounded by a new cast of players, reunited with his long-time sidekick Scottie Pippen and his coach of choice, Jackson, Jordan brought the Bulls back to the top of the NBA.

Taking back the leadership role that Pippen had struggled with during his absence, Jordan had what he always needed — another challenge. Those who thought he'd been away too long or was too old were wrong.

He would show them, and he did as the Bulls won an NBA record 72 games in the 1995-96 season.

He heard the cries of double standard by frustrated defenders and charges of preferential treatment from the officials. He was above the game — literally and figuratively — because he had done so much for it, made the NBA known from one side of the planet to the other.

Theatre? How about donning his early footwear for a retro attack on the hated Knicks at Madison Square Garden and once again beating the whiny, arrogant team that could never contain him. He twice decimated Cleveland in the playoffs with last-second shots, so much so that the Cavs, despite many changes, have never recovered.

Jordan led the league in scoring for the 10th time last season, although his 28.7 average was his lowest since his second year in the league. His 46 per cent shooting during the regular season was his lowest for a full season, and his 78 per cent from the line was a career low.

But in a close game, it was still give him the ball and watch him work.

What was it like to guard him?

"Hell," says Nick Anderson, the Orlando Magic guard, who gave Jordan problems in the 1995 playoffs as Jordan struggled to regain his game. "You ever been to hell before? You don't want to go."

Jordan isn't sticking around because he wants glory or needs money. He's finished, it seems, because he couldn't have picked a better time to say goodbye.

"I want to leave at the top of my game," he said last season. "That's something I've always said about when it's time for me to walk away. I know people wouldn't expect it because I'm still playing at a high level. But that's the appropriate time to leave, I think."

Rios withdraws from NZ tournament

AUCKLAND (AFP) — World No. 2 Marcelo Rios withdrew from the Heineken Open international tennis tournament here Tuesday just 46 minutes into his first-round game against Romanian Andre Pavel.

Rios, last year's beaten Australian Open finalist to Petr Korda, will leave for Melbourne Wednesday and is hoping to be fit to play in next week's grand slam, where he is expected to be the top seed after the withdrawal of Pete Sampras.

The Chilean had won the first set 7-5 but when he was

broken in the second game of the second set, failing to chase a ball on break point, it was all over. The defending champion, Rios, clutched at his back for most of the match and never looked comfortable. He immediately went into the locker room to receive treatment for a strained right hamstring. "I thought I'd be able to play and I wanted to be able to play, but practice and matches are different," Rios said.

"You have to listen to your body and I wasn't able to move like I need to."

"I've been doing everything I can to fix the leg. I've been

getting treatment on it and stretching and it felt much better than it did a few days ago. "I'm going to spend the next week trying to get it ready 100 per cent."

"You're always disappointed when you lose or when you have to retire from a match, I just didn't want to force it too much and end up missing two or three months," he said.

Rios earned himself what is understood to be just under NZ\$100,000 (\$50,000) for his brief appearance Tuesday. First prize in the ATP Tour Heineken Open is \$46,000.

Deutsche Telekom deny Riis doping claim

BONN (AFP) — The spokesman for the German team of Danish 1996 Tour de France winner Bjarne Riis has rejected suspicions of doping levelled at the cyclist in a television documentary on Monday night.

Deutsche Telekom spokesman Matthias Schumann cast doubts on the authenticity of a document that the Danish TV programme-makers claim to show that 34-year-old Riis may have taken banned substance EPO, which boosts the oxygen content in the

blood and thus can boost endurance, in 1995.

"Schumann said: 'The document produced is doubtful, its origin is unknown and it proves nothing. You could produce a document like that from any ordinary computer.'

"All our competitors are totally clean without exception. They are under daily medical control and are even subjected to tests from outside."

Bjarne Riis has told his lawyer that he was waiting for the elements to be

brought by Danish television after waiting for a day or two and that he was thinking of launching a lawsuit.

The documentary, on Danish TV channel DR1, said that Riis was tested during a rest day on June 10 during the 1995 Tour and was found to have a red blood cell level of 56.3 per cent compared with one of 41.1 per cent in January that year. He was then part of the Italian team Gewiss-Ballan.

The International Cycling Union (UCI) established a

maximum 50 per cent blood level threshold in the combat against EPO doping.

Riis signed for Telekom in 1995 and in 1996 won the Tour de France.

The team's doctor Lothar Heinrich said: "Since he has been with us, his blood tests have not presented a single anomaly. Likewise with red blood cell levels, which we measure every four weeks."

Riis categorically denied ever having used EPO on Danish TV, saying: "These figures are not mine. I don't remember having a blood

test on June 10, 1995."

The 1998 Tour de France was rocked with persistent allegations of doping with the Festina team being expelled from the Tour after its masseur, Willy Voet, was

found in possession of a trunkload of banned drugs. Many competitors, including Festina's Richard Virenque, were arrested by French police and forced to undergo medical tests.

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL:463-4144	CINEMA TEL:463-4144	CINEMA TEL:5699238	CINEMA TEL:5677420	CINEMA TEL:5934793	CINEMA TEL:5934793	Risham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155
	PHILADELPHIA '1'	PHILADELPHIA '2'	PLAZA	CONCORDE	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	
	Michael Douglas & Sean Penn .. in	Bruce Willis & Richard Gere .. in	Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in	Steven Segall.. in	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria	
	THE GAME	THE JACKAL	SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY	FIRE DOWN BELOW	Mel Gibson .. in	One of Walt Disney's best movies	Watch out for the new play
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				Al Pacino & Robert De Niro.. in	LETHAL WEAPON 4	MULAN	
				HEAT			
				Show: 10:15			

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Sport

LOCAL S

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Tigana quits

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Sboul receives Pan-Arab Games Ministerial Committee

AMMAN — Minister of Justice Jawdat Sboul Tuesday stressed that Jordan is concerned about the success of the 9th Pan-Arab Games, which will be held here Aug. 15-31. Sboul, who received an Arab Ministerial Committee delegation yesterday, said the Kingdom has taken all necessary measures and preparations to hold the tournament, and promised that the government will do its best to ensure the event's success. Meanwhile, Minister of Culture and Youth Talal Sala'an Al Hassan said he will participate in the Arab Youth Ministers' meeting, which will be held next month in Algeria. Al Hassan will brief the meeting on the country's recent preparations for the Games. The minister expressed hope that the event will witness wide ranging Arab participation. A ministerial team is expected to be formed after the meeting in order to market the tournament. The team is also scheduled to inspect Jordanian preparations after a tour in the Arab countries.

Egypt discusses African, Arab Games

AMMAN — The Egyptian Olympic Committee recently held a meeting with the country's sport federations to discuss coordination regarding participation in two major events — the Aug. 15-31, 1999 Pan-Arab Games and September's All Africa Games. An official said Egypt is concerned about the Pan-Arab Games and it will participate in all events. The source added that a meeting will be held after the 'Eid to discuss preparatory and financial issues.

FIFA move towards biennial Cup

ZURICH (AFP) — FIFA have taken a big step towards clearing the way to a biennial World Cup by announcing a plan to harmonise the international football calendar.

A meeting will be held on Friday, chaired by FIFA secretary-general Michael Zen-Ruffinen, with a view to reschedule continental championships such as the European Championships, the Copa America and the African Nations Cup, which at present are held in different cycles.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter's plan for a biennial World Cup will also be debated ahead of further discussions in March by the body's Strategic Studies and Executive Committees.

"There have been a number of efforts in the past to coordinate the international calendar but generally they have not allowed enough time for the current cycle of matches to be completed before introducing a new period in which the events are more carefully scheduled," Zen-Ruffinen said.

"It will be important to plan several years in advance in order to prepare for a fresh start," he added.

The meeting heralds the clear intent of FIFA to move towards a biennial World Cup — an event which Blatter conceded is unlikely to come into reality before 2008.

The main practical obstacle to such a move is the fact that each continent stages its own championship at different times, making a biennial tournament incompatible with the current calendar.

Moves to adopt a harmonised calendar indicate that it is an issue that FIFA is prepared to tackle head on in a bid to pave the way for a biennial World Cup.

Cruyff named greatest footballer of century

ROTTERDAM (AFP) — Holland's former World Cup legend Johan Cruyff has been named the greatest European player of the century in a poll of top European players, managers and journalists organised by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS).

Cruyff, 51, was too ill to accept the award, received on his behalf by his daughter Cecilia and won 753 votes with second-placed Franz Beckenbauer getting 709. Former Real Madrid legend Alfredo Di Stefano, who played for Spain and Argentina, was third.

Cruyff's brand of "total football" transformed Holland into a force in world football and took them to the 1974 World Cup final where they were beaten 2-1 in Munich by Beckenbauer's West Germany.

He came to prominence with Amsterdam club Ajax, who won three consecutive European Cups (1971-3)



German soccer legend Franz Beckenbauer (R) jokes with Cruyff's WC 90 star Roger Milla at the World Football Gala in Rotterdam, where both were named second best player of their continent in this century. The International Federation of Football and Statistics named Dutch Johan Cruyff and AC Milan's Liberian striker George Weah best European and best African player of the century (AFP photo)

and later played for Barcelona in Spain, a club he later managed. He boycotted the 1978 World Cup in Argentina when the Dutch team again lost in the final to the host nation.

Next year the IFFHS will organise a vote for the greatest player of the century in world football.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Salernitana sack coach

MILAN (AFP) — Serie A strugglers Salernitana sacked their coach Delio Rossi and replaced him with Francesco Oddo on Tuesday in a bid to avoid relegation at the end of the season. Oddo, 52, coached Reggiana last season and was still under contract to the second division club despite having been sacked by them earlier in the season. Rossi's dismissal followed Salernitana's 1-0 defeat to fellow strugglers Vicenza on Sunday, leaving them second from bottom — one point above Venezia, who have a match in hand.

Leonhardsen wants to leave Liverpool

LONDON (AFP) — Norwegian international midfielder Oyvind Leonhardsen believes he will have to quit English Premiership side Liverpool to save his career. Leonhardsen, 29, believes a move is inevitable after failing to make the first team for two months and his agent has said his client will have to move abroad. The Norwegian still has two years to serve on his current deal — he signed for £3.5million from Wimbledon in 1997 — but has failed to make an impression on Liverpool's French manager, Gerard Houllier. Leonhardsen said: "It's been a season of disappointment for me so far. I've not played a lot. I don't know the reason. I don't think it's due to a change of manager because I wasn't even playing before Roy Evans went. 'I have a contract for two more seasons. I don't want to say what might happen but I'm not happy with my situation that's for sure.' The player's agent Eric Soller confirmed: "We might have to look outside England for Oyvind's next move."

British sailor retires from Around Alone race

AUCKLAND (AFP) — British sailor Mike Golding officially withdrew Tuesday from the Around Alone around-the-world yacht race because of serious keel damage which forced him to retire from the race's second stage. Golding was the overall leader in the race until a grounding off New Zealand's northern-most tip Cape Reinga in the latter part of the second stage. He said his Team Group 4 would not be able to replace the damaged keel blade in time for the start of leg three of the race, leaving from Auckland on February 6. "It is with much sadness that I have to announce my retirement from the 1998-99 Around Alone race," he said in a statement. Golding's Team Group 4 was leading in the around-the-world race on January 1 when he made a critical navigation error and crashed into a reef coming around Cape Reinga in clear, calm weather. He admitted making an error and flatly denied the drama occurred because he was posing for the sponsor's helicopter overhead.

Quebec may sue the IOC over failed bid

QUEBEC (AFP) — Quebec City may sue the International Olympic Committee over its failed proposal to host the 2002 Winter Games. Following the bribery allegations surrounding the successful bid by Salt Lake City, Rene Paquet, the former head of the Quebec City 2002 bid committee, said Monday: "We have been involved in a process where the rules of the law may not have been followed by a dishonest candidate." "We were looking for a substantial financial reimbursement." He said he would discuss the matter later this week with Quebec City Mayor Jean-Paul L'Allier. L'Allier, however, has been less adamant regarding the filing of a lawsuit and on Monday he described the idea of taking the IOC to court as "premature." The Quebec and Canadian governments spent \$8 million financing the unsuccessful bid.

Keane threatens to quit United

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United's skipper Roy Keane is threatening to quit the English Premiership giants when his contract runs out next year — unless he gets a massive wage increase. The 27-year-old Irish international is reported to want £40,000 per week to stay at Old Trafford, and although manager Alex Ferguson will be desperately keen to keep Keane, meeting the player's terms would blow the club's tight wage structure apart. "This is not blackmailing anybody. I am not making threats," said Keane. "But if it's not the contract I want, I won't sign. Hopefully, we can agree things when we sit down."

Fontenay wins 10th stage of Dakar Rally

TIMBUKTOO, Mali (AFP) — Frenchman Jean-Pierre Fontenay, the defending champion, won the 10th stage of the Dakar Rally on Monday in his Mitsubishi — his second stage victory of the race. While Fontenay clocked 4hr 17min 11sec to complete the stage, his French compatriot Jean-Louis Schlesser maintained 430km of special stages in Mali, his French compatriot Jean-Louis Schlesser holds his overall lead in the automobile section by finishing third in the stage. Schlesser holds a lead of 8min 25sec over Spaniard Miguel Prieto, who was also second in the stage in his Mitsubishi. The 10th stage was cancelled for the exhausted motorcycle competitors, who were airlifted to Timbuktoo.

Tigana quits as Monaco coach

MONACO (AFP) — Former French football star Jean Tigana quit as coach of struggling Monaco, the club announced here on Tuesday. Club president Jean-Louis Campora said Tigana would be replaced by Claude Puel, backed up by Jean-Luc Etorri and Jean Petit. All three are former Monaco players.

Rubin advances at Tasmanian International

HOBART (AFP) — American fifth seed Chanda Rubin cruised into the third round of the Tasmanian International women's tournament here Tuesday with a comfortable win over compatriot Samantha Reeves.

Rubin said she was delighted with the way she was hitting the ball after despatching Reeves, a qualifier, 6-1, 6-1 in 54 minutes.

Third-seeded Virginia Ruano-Pascual of Spain had to work much harder to overcome another qualifier, Canada's Maureen Drake 7-5, 4-6, 6-2.

Seventh-seeded Romanian Ruxandra Dragomir became the third seed to fall when she was outplayed by Italy's Rita Grande 6-1, 6-3.

In the only other second round match, Nathalie Dechy of France needed only 51 minutes to beat Miriam Oremans of the Netherlands 6-4, 6-0.

Cafu goes Italian

ROME (AFP) — Brazilian World Cup defender Cafu was granted Italian citizenship on Tuesday in a move which enables his Serie A club, AS Roma, to field him as a European Union footballer, and not as a "foreigner."

Italian clubs may only field five non-EU citizens in their teams but now Roma have room for another foreign player, most likely 21-year-old Brazilian, Fabio Junior, who is expected to sign a four-year deal later this week.

Roma president Franco Sensi has reportedly already done a deal worth about \$12 million with Fabio Junior's current club, Cruzeiro.

Cafu came on as a substitute in Brazil's 1994 World Cup final victory over Italy and featured prominently in their run to the final last year where they lost 3-0 to host nation France.

He will continue to represent Brazil at international level.

ANDRE AGASSI (L) speaks to the media about the positive drug recorded by Petr Korda of the Czech Republic (2nd from R) at a press conference with fellow players Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia (2nd from L), Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia (3rd from L), Australian Mark Philippoussis (C), Thomas Enqvist of Sweden (3rd from R), and Michael Chang of the U.S. (R). Korda has come under fire from fellow professionals on the tour in what they see was a light punishment for a positive drug test and the International Tennis Federation (ITF) intends to appeal the decision (AFP photo)



Rafter and Rusedski bounced out of Sydney International

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australian teenager Lleyton Hewitt threw Pat Rafter's Australian Open preparations further off course on Tuesday with an emphatic first round win at the Sydney International.

Double U.S. Open champion Rafter, who lost in the second round of the Adelaide tournament last week, now aims to flee the spotlight ahead of the start of the first Grand Slam of the year in Melbourne next week.

Hewitt, 17, who reached the final of the Adelaide tournament which he won last year, blasted the struggling Rafter off court in 81 minutes, winning 7-6 (7/1), 6-1.

Rafter's game disintegrated after losing a first set tiebreaker.

He had two breaks on his service and made several unforced errors before he lost on the first match point when Hewitt whipped a passing forehand across court.

"That's the best win of my short career, even though I've beaten guys like (Andre) Agassi, to play the number one guy in your country at the time and being a double U.S. Open champion is just fantastic," said Hewitt.

Rafter said he would go away on his own to rethink before the Australian Open in Melbourne.

The World No. 4 had been one of the favourites for the Open after the withdrawal of Pete Sampras.

Rafter admitted there were times on court when he felt uneasy and did not play the big points very well.

Rafter, who has only reached the fourth round of his home Open once in seven attempts, was pined against Hewitt in red-hot form.

The youngster took Sweden's Thomas Enqvist to three sets in last Sunday's Australian men's hardcourt championship final.

Britain's Greg Rusedski

the fifth seed who lost to Rafter in the 1997 U.S. Open final, became the second major casualty when he lost to former French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil 6-1, 3-6, 4-6.

The World No. 9 lost to world 124 Bernd Karbacher of Germany in the first round of last week's Qatar Open. But he seemed calm after the latest blow.

"There's nothing to be negative about, nothing to be down about it," Rusedski said.

Former women's World No. 1 Martina Hingis saw off promising young Australian Alicia Molik in 55 minutes, winning her second round match 6-1, 6-2.

Hingis' 80-week reign at number one ended last October when she was supplanted by American Lindsay Davenport and retaining the Australian Open title could help a return to the top in the next few weeks.

Last year Hingis lost to

American Venus Williams in the opening round in Sydney, but she had few problems with big-serving 17-year-old Molik.

Hingis is looking for a hat-trick of Australian Open titles after beating Mary Pierce of France in 1997 and Conchita Martinez of Spain last year.

Sixth seed Steffi Graf, making her first Sydney

appearance since 1984, beat Japan's Ai Sugiyama 6-0, 6-4 in a night match to advance to a second round meeting with American Serena Williams.

Russia's Anna Kournikova hit 23 double faults before scraping home in her first round match against Italian Silvia Farina on her fifth match point, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5.

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Butler says U.N. weapons inspectors will return to Iraq

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chief U.N. weapons inspector Richard Butler is promising his agency will return to work in Iraq, possibly with a less intrusive monitoring mission to keep close watch on President Saddam Hussein.

"UNSCOM is not dead," Butler said of the U.N. Special Commission.

Instead, U.N. weapons inspectors are designing an expansive monitoring programme to ensure the Iraqi president doesn't rebuild weapons destroyed as required by the 1991 Gulf War cease-fire, he said Monday.

"We've had one [monitoring system] there since 1994, but clearly in the future it will have to be bigger in scope, range, staffing," Butler said in remarks to a nonproliferation conference sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"We'll be back under this new dispensation," said Butler, who noted that it could take months for the U.N. Security Council and member states to approve such a plan and that the resolution is not yet assured.

The U.S.-British air strikes on Iraq Dec. 16-19 — launched after Butler said Baghdad wasn't cooperating with U.N. inspectors — effectively ended UNSCOM's work to ensure Iraq destroyed its chemical and biological weapons and most missiles and does not rebuild them.

Since the four-day attack,

Saddam has challenged other U.S. and U.N. controls, including "no-fly" zones over northern and southern Iraq. On Tuesday, in the sixth clash in the zones since Dec. 28, an Air Force fighter jet fired an anti-radiation missile at an Iraqi radar installation near Mosul in the northern zone.

As in two separate incidents Monday, the U.S. plane did not come under fire and returned safely to base, the Pentagon said.

President Bill Clinton has pledged to continue patrolling the "no-fly" zones as part of a strategy of keeping Saddam contained by diminishing his ability to attack opposition groups and neighbouring nations.

Allegations that U.S. intelligence agencies used UNSCOM to spy on Iraq have damaged the image of the old UNSCOM system, but Butler has repeatedly rejected the charges. Intelligence help from the United States and 35 to 40 other countries, Butler said, "has been deployed for the purpose of our disarmament and monitoring mandates and that alone."

Butler confirmed that all U.N. monitoring of Iraq has stopped, including high surveillance flights by American U-2 spy planes.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, which was charged with verifying Iraq had halted its nuclear weapons development, last year began a "monitoring programme like the one now envisioned for UNSCOM."

If the Security Council approves a less intrusive system, UNSCOM would shift its focus from surprise inspections and aggressive document searches — which angered Iraq and uncovered Baghdad's efforts to conceal its weapons programme — to an operation that would widely monitor Iraq to ensure it wasn't resuming major weapons development, Butler said.

Such monitoring was supposed to have started only after UNSCOM declared Iraq free of weapons of mass destruction. U.N. economic sanctions also were to be lifted if UNSCOM said Iraq is fully disarmed.

The Clinton administration backs maintaining robust U.N. weapons inspections, although U.S. officials haven't ruled out a revamped UNSCOM.

State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said U.N. resolutions requiring disarmament of Iraq before monitoring can begin "can't be leapfrogged." But he added, "We have always been open to ideas to improve the professionalism, the competence and the effectiveness of the U.N. Special Commission's regime and we will continue to be willing to discuss any such ideas with our partners in the Security Council."

It remains unclear whether Saddam would invite UNSCOM inspectors back into Iraq under any system in light of the U.S.-British air strikes.



EATING KARL MARX: A box of 'Karl Marx chocolate' is displayed Tuesday in the eastern German town of Chemnitz. Chemnitz, named 'Karl-Marx City' during the German Democratic Republic period and site of a 12-metre-high Karl-Marx monument, sells the 'Karl Marx chocolate' at a city information centre (Reuters photo)

'Balfour author concealed Jewish ancestry'

LONDON (AP) — The author of the Balfour Declaration, a key document in the foundation of the Israeli state, covered up his own Jewish ancestry, a historian says.

Leopold Amery, a British lawmaker, changed his middle name from Moritz to Maurice in an apparent effort to efface his Jewish connections on his mother's side. Professor William Rubinstein of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, writes in the current issue of "History Today" magazine.

Rubinstein reaches no conclusion about why Amery would have done this, or how it influenced his political career.

In his autobiography, "My Political Life," published shortly before his death in 1953, Amery said only that his mother had fled Hungary after the revolutions of 1848. He said his father came from an old Jewish family.

Rubinstein said Amery's mother was Elizabeth Johanna Saphir and was of purely Jewish descent.

"It is an extraordinary secret,

possibly the most remarkable example of concealment of identity in 20th-century British political history," Rubinstein said.

As assistant secretary to the war cabinet in 1917, Amery drafted a letter for Lord Balfour, the foreign secretary, expressing Britain's support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."

The Balfour Declaration was endorsed by the Allied powers and included in the British mandate over Palestine

approved by the League of Nations in 1922.

One of Amery's sons, John, was a fascist who was hanged for treason in London in World War II. Another son, Julian, a longtime Conservative member of Parliament, died in 1996.

Rubinstein speculated that Amery may have covered up his Jewish ancestry to avoid harassment at school, or to avoid being pressured by Jewish interests as a member of Parliament.

Bridal shower lands bride-to-be in court

BEIRUT (AP) — Pictures of a bridal shower featuring a cake shaped like a male sex organ and a man dressed as a woman may land the bride-to-be and a group of friends in jail, a newspaper reported Tuesday. A Beirut prosecutor charged the woman and her friends with indecent behaviour after photos of the party appeared in a monthly magazine, the daily Al Safir reported. It said the baker of the cake and the man who appeared in drag also were charged. The bride, whose name was not given, was quoted as saying she was surprised to learn such parties, which are common in the West where she lived for 17 years, were prohibited in Lebanon.

PM drops plan to move into museum

BUDAPEST (APF) — Hungarian premier Viktor Orban has dropped plans to move his office into a prestigious museum after widespread criticism, a spokesman said Tuesday. Orban said he wanted to move his cabinet office, in Hungary's parliament building, to the spacious halls of the Ethnography Museum to leave more room for MPs. But critics pointed out that the cost of the relocation would be \$93 million, even before refurbishing the museum, which includes central Europe's biggest specialised ethnology library of 160,000 volumes.

Abusive referees could be recorded

MEXICO CITY (RE) — Mexican referees, accused of insulting players, may be asked to wear microphones so that their conversations could be recorded during matches. Proposals to "wire" referees are normally made to help communication between them and their linesmen. Argentine midfielder Antonio Mohammad, captain of first division Monterrey, put forward the plan after claiming players are often verbally abused by referees. The idea, put forward during a meeting of team captains and referees, was approved by the officials themselves. "It would be very interesting as there would be no doubts as to whether the referees have insulted or not," said Amando Archundia, president of the referees' association.

London's newest tourist attraction — the dog pound

LONDON (AP) — Along with the obligatory visits to Big Ben, the Tower of London and Madame Tussaud's, London tourists are increasingly peering into a dog pound, rather than a shop or another, rather unlikely attraction — the local dog pound. The attraction is The Dogs' Home Battersea, a 127-year-old animal shelter whose profile has grown in recent years along with its well-documented success at "re-homing" stray and unwanted dogs and cats. The shelter, which counts Queen Elizabeth II among its many patrons and visitors, now is being featured in a daily British Broadcasting Corp. documentary series.

Ready for a 'No Spank Zone'?

OAKLAND (RE) — Californians are proud to be smoke-free, fat-free and sugar-free. But are they ready to be spank-free? Child welfare activist Jordan Riak said Monday he was proposing that the city of Oakland establish itself as the country's first official "No Spanking Zone" to discourage parents from hitting their children. "At the moment, people are whining and beating and hurting their children with nobody telling them what they are doing is wrong and dangerous," Riak told Reuters.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Netanyahu even with Barak in poll

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Right-wing incumbent Benjamin Netanyahu has pulled even with opposition Labor Party leader Ehud Barak in the race for Israel's prime minister just four months before national elections, according to a survey published Tuesday. The poll by the Gallup Institute for the Maariv newspaper showed that in a second-round run off, Netanyahu and Barak would both receive 45 per cent of the vote, with 10 per cent of electors undecided. It was the first time in several weeks that Barak was not shown beating Netanyahu in a head-to-head contest.

British hostage in good shape

SANAA (AFP) — A British oil worker kidnapped in Yemen was reported to be in good shape on Tuesday as tribal leaders pressed on with mediation to secure his release. A tribal source said the hostage, John Brooke, had been moved from the Marib region of eastern Yemen to a hideout near the Saudi border in Khab, more than 200 kilometres north of Sanaa. Brooke "has contacted his company in Sanaa. He confirmed that he was fine," said vice consul Kate Barry-Smith at the British embassy.

Iran condemns Iraq's claims on Kuwait

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran condemned on Tuesday Iraqi territorial claims on neighbouring Kuwait and said an Iranian envoy on a visit to Baghdad will discuss the issue. "Such territorial claims are not a proper solution to resolve differences," between Iraq and Kuwait, said foreign ministry spokesman Hamdi-Reza Asafi. "Regional problems ought to be settled through negotiations and tension-free talks... A conflict between Iraq and Kuwait will be the worst problem for the region," he told the English-language Iran News. Asafi warned that a conflict would provide a "pretext for foreign powers to protect their vested interests here and abuse the situation."

Five people killed east of Algiers

ALGIERS (AFP) — Five people were killed overnight by armed Islamic extremists in northeastern Algeria, security services said Tuesday. The killings in Al Beidha, near Bouira, some 120 kilometres southeast of Algiers, brought to 120 the number killed in massacres and attacks in the country since the start of the fasting month of Ramadan on Dec. 19.

Most Arab states to attend Iraq meeting

CAIRO (AP) — Most Arab governments will send representatives to a meeting in Cairo later this month to discuss the latest Iraq crisis, Arab League officials said Tuesday. A similar gathering was postponed last month because of disagreement within the 22-member Arab League over Baghdad's insistence that the group consider defying U.N. trade sanctions on Iraq. Arab League officials said 17 countries have confirmed in writing that they will attend the Jan. 24 meeting. The Arab League officials said the countries committed to the Cairo meeting are Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Syria, Somalia, Oman, Qatar, Lebanon, Yemen, Kuwait, Mauritania, Djibouti, the Comoros and the Palestinian National Authority. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain also are expected to attend, the officials said. Libya, Morocco and Iraq have not yet decided, the officials added. They spoke on condition of anonymity.

Iraqi stowaways seek Philippines asylum

MANILA (AFP) — Three Iraqi stowaways are seeking asylum in the Philippines, officials said Tuesday. The three — identified as Abdul Zahra Abdul Karim Mohammad Al Assadi, Yilmaz Hussein Ali Bitouk and Ali Ibrahim Jumaa Al Timeemi, will be granted a hearing to determine the merits of their application. Foreign Secretary Domingo Sison told reporters.

10 arrested for murders of dissidents in Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Ten people have been arrested in connection with the murders of intellectuals and dissidents in Iran in which the intelligence ministry has been implicated, a committee probing the killings said Tuesday.

"Ten people have been arrested and questioned over the affair," said the committee set up by President Mohammad Khatami in a statement read on state radio and television.

"The case, very complicated, has taken on a national dimension and conducting a correct and healthy investigation is a heavy duty," it said.

Iran's intelligence ministry said last week that a number of "ill-minded and irresponsible colleagues" were involved in the murders of nationalist opposition leader Daryush Foruhar as well as several liberal writers in November and

December. The committee — made up of Intelligence Minister Ghorban-Ali Dorrie Najafabadi, Interior Minister Abdul Vahed Musavi Lari and a representative of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei — was set up last month to investigate the killings.

The television said the members of the committee met Khatami on Tuesday and briefed him on the latest developments in the case.

The president demanded that the probe "continue with strength, without any regard for marginal issues, until final results are produced."

"Our round-the-clock investigation has produced the necessary clues to identify the entire gang linked to the murders at different levels," the committee said in its statement. "A number of effective elements in the gang's leadership

were arrested and questioned."

The committee said "a number of others have been fully identified and are presently under surveillance," adding that it preferred to withhold detailed information while the probe continues.

"The masterminds behind the murders have been identified and a massive investigation has been launched to find outside elements who are mainly responsible for the suspicious murders," it said.

"The investigation will continue without any attention to the foreign and domestic political hype around the affair and the culprits will be put on trial as soon as possible," the statement added.

The affair has led to bitter political fighting between reformers backing Khatami and his conservative opponents over how to deal with the formidable secret services,

with both sides blaming each other for the murders.

Radical left-wing reformers have demanded the conservative intelligence minister's ouster, while the conservatives appear determined to stop their rivals from making any political gains from the incident.

Ruhollah Husseinian, a hardline cleric in charge of the state archives for official documents, accused Khatami's left-wing supporters of having a role in the murders, suggesting that they are being manipulated by American secret services.

He accused the president's backers of launching a "malicious campaign" to gain control of the all-powerful intelligence agency and urged its chief to hold fast against efforts to oust him.

His comments published in the hardline Kayhan newspa-

per and broadcast on conservative-run television provoked widespread anger in the moderate and left-wing press, which described his comments as a "pathetic tactic" to stop the investigation into the murders.

They also accused state radio and television of insulting Khatami and seeking to undermine his efforts to fight political violence by Islamic hardliners.

The committee in charge of the investigation, for its part, blasted "the rumours and the scandal-mongering" around the case, charging that "the wrong analysis and accusations are aimed at confusing the process of investigation and deny the truth."

"Any news or information coming from anywhere but this committee or Tehran's military court is void and inauspicious," it warned.

Defendants in McDonald's libel case open appeal for change in law

LONDON (AP) — Multinational corporations should have no right to suppress criticism by filing libel suits, two vegetarian campaigners argued Tuesday as they sought to overturn a ruling that they libelled McDonald's.

"The point of serving libel writs is not to have a court case but... to have a 'chilling effect' on free speech," campaigner Dave Morris said.

Morris, 44, and Helen Steel, 33, defended themselves in the "McLibel" case, which turned out to be a dubious venture for the corporation. At 314 days in court, spread over 2 1/2 years, it was the longest trial in English history.

In June 1997, McDonald's won a judgement that it had been defamed by Morris and Steel, who had distributed pamphlets entitled "What's wrong with McDonald's? Everything they don't want you to know."

McDonald's is estimated to have spent \$16 million on the case, however, and did not bother trying to

collect damages of \$98,000 from the unemployed defendants.

The company also suffered the embarrassment of the trial judge's ruling that it was, in fact, responsible for animal cruelty, that it exploited children through its advertising and that it paid workers in Britain poorly.

Morris and Steel argued that their pamphlet was a statement of opinion, and deserved to be protected as free speech. They said Britons should be free to criticise corporations in the same way they can let off steam against government agencies.

McDonald's was due to outline its case later in the week. Its lead attorney, Richard Rampton, estimated arguments would take about two weeks.

The scene in a chilly courtroom at the Royal Courts of Justice emphasised the imbalance between the combatants.

McDonald's was represented by two barristers in wigs and black gowns, while Steel and Morris wore sporting sweaters.

U.S. imposes sanctions against Russian institutions

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States imposed economic penalties Tuesday against a Moscow university and two other Russian institutions, accusing them of assisting Iran with nuclear and missile technology.

National Security Adviser Sandy Berger announced the sanctions at a nonproliferation conference at which he also pledged an all-out effort to gain Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). He said efforts would be redoubled this year to stop weapons expansion in North Korea, South Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere.

"We've made it very clear the administration has authority to act against entities that violate international nonproliferation standards and we will use that authority to protect our security," Berger said. Similar sanctions were imposed against seven other Russian institutions in July.

Berger gave no details of the sanctions, which are against Mendeleyev Chemical Technical University in Moscow, the Scientific Research and Design Institute of Power and Technology and

the Moscow Aviation Institute. Previous penalties prevented any U.S. dealings with the institutions, some of which had government ties.

"Weapons scientists and institutions face increased financial pressure to sell their wares to whomever is in the market, including rogue states," Berger said in a speech at the annual Carnegie International Nonproliferation Conference. He acknowledged that nonproliferation of Russian nuclear and missile technology would not be stopped by U.S. penalties but requires a tighter Russian export control system.

"Only Russia can police its own borders, factories and technology industry," Berger said.

The penalties in July barred U.S. dealings with seven Russian research and manufacturing enterprises for selling sensitive weapons technology to Iran, Libya and North Korea. The aim of such sanctions is to halt the proliferation of technology that could help those countries and others develop chemical, biological or nuclear weapons or the means of delivering them.

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